

DEMONSTRATION FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCE USERS. BOGOTÁ COLOMBIA

**OCTOBER 6, 2011, 3:00 P.M.
IN FRONT OF THE INTERIOR MINISTRY BUILDING**

We, a group of users and non-users of legal and illegal psychoactive substances, after analyzing the reform proposal of the National Statute on Drugs (Law 30 of 1986) and bearing in mind the fact that:

- According to the regulation currently in force, carrying and consuming the personal dose is still permitted, the pending legislative act 002 of 2009 is aiming to compel users into treatment;
- The *National Policy on Reduction of Psychoactive Substances Use and their Impact* (Política Nacional para la Reducción del Consumo de Sustancias Psicoactivas y su Impacto) establishes consumption as a public health issue and its social risk management approach is an innovative method for dealing with consumption;
- The cost of the “War on Drugs” far exceeds benefits;
- Colombia, the continent and the whole world move towards a new paradigm by bringing alternative, innovative and local ideas to confront the phenomenon of illegal psychoactive substances;
- The Supreme Court of Justice established that carrying illegal psychoactive substances for personal use is not punishable; the *City Security Law* (ley de Seguridad Ciudadana) pretends to override the personal dose;
- Colombia is no longer a country that only produces psychoactive substances, now it is also a consumer;
- According to the figures of the United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime, the vast majority, 80%, of users of illegal psychoactive substances are not problematic;
- We are functional and active members of society, actors having a political and economical impact;

Take a stance against the Statute, as well as against other norms and terms of reference affecting users and non-users of illegal psychoactive substances.

I. Guidelines

1. We use the category **Psychoactive Substances**, because it covers the legal as well as the illegal ones. We disown the word “drug” because it has been a source for stigma, prejudice, war and exclusion.
2. We invite users to **go out of the psychoactive closet** and not to self-exclusion. Society must acknowledge the reality that psychoactive substance users are functional and productive members of society.
3. Consumers are **neither sick nor delinquents**. We rather use the term recreational user, because they are people who care for the public as well as their physical and mental health. Abuse will always be harmful.

4. **Prevention of consumption in childhood and youth** must be based on scientific evidence and must put aside fear and prejudices as educational tools.
5. **Kids, teenagers, young people, handicapped people, prison population, street-dwellers and sex workers** constitute the population needing priority attention on psychoactive substance issues.
6. **Current repressive laws kill more and bring more harm than psychoactive substances.**
7. **Colombia must head the international debate** on the paradigm shift on illegal psychoactive substances. Our nation has the cultural tradition and the moral authority needed to lead this change.

II. Proposals

1. **Make the most of the human capital.** Everything affecting psychoactive substance users must be consulted with and approved by that community. In order to design and implement effective control policies it is necessary to count with members of the psychoactive substance users' community in every instance discussing legal and illegal psychoactive substances.
2. Recognize **Human Rights and public health** as the starting point for any effective measure dealing with the phenomenon of psychoactive substances.
3. Acknowledge the reality that **people will use psychoactive substances regardless of what the law says**; therefore the priority is caring about people's health.
4. Acknowledge that the psychoactive substance use can be **experimental, recreational, regular, compulsive, problematic or addictive** and that each must be treated differently.
5. Create a **system of early warnings** regarding illegal psychoactive substances, indicating the risks and the consequences their use have on people's health.
6. **Reject mandatory treatments.** Recognize the right to autonomy and self-determination. No one besides the user can decide when, where and how to quit his/her habit.
7. **Increase the offer and strengthen the quality of the treatment centers** for those wishing to quit their habit and needing help. Guarantee treatment already covered by the Mandatory Health Plan (Plan Obligatorio de Salud).
8. **The consumption and the possession of illegal psychoactive substances for personal use must remain decriminalized.**
9. **People wishing to grow coca and cannabis plants for their personal use must be permitted to do so** as a mechanism to fight drug-dealers and to protect the users' health.
10. Create a **system of regulation, control and dispensation of illegal psychoactive substances** as an option to legalization. In particular a system regulating coca-based and cannabis-based products must be implemented.

11. **Create specialized health services** watching for the health of users not wishing or not being able to quit.
12. Create tools for **reducing and mitigating the risks and harm** related to the use of psychoactive substance for users not wishing or not being able to quit but that take care of their health.
13. **Educate public officers, civil servants and the public in general about psychoactive substances.** Teachers, police men, civil servants and health practitioners cannot be source of stigmatization but must fight it.
14. Promote **studies and research** on the benefits of illegal psychoactive substances in the fields of medicine, biology, psychology and chemistry.
15. **Dedicate 40% of the assets seized from drug-dealers to prevention, mitigation and overcoming of consumption,** as well as for creation of opportunities for the vulnerable population.
16. **Quit repression and persecution** of non-users against users, replacing it by **mutual respect and conciliation.**
17. Recognize the **pursuit of happiness** through the use of psychoactive substances, and not to see on it only the pursuit of sickness, of escapism and of mental or physical incapacity.
18. Recognize as an **abuse of power** to disown the rights of users, to stigmatize them, to persecute them and to exclude them.

This statement counts with the support of the citizens, organizations, networks, and institutions signing below.

To support this statement please indicate the name of your institution and the e-mail address of the person that sent it to you.



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