

## **Press statement – FAAAT think & do tank Vienna, UN headquarters, 7th December 2018.**

**World Health Organization (WHO) much anticipated release of findings of two year scientific assessment of Cannabis leaves observers stunned and upset.** The last assessment by WHO in 1954 fuelled global prohibition under the UN drug control Treaty framework.

Today in front of governments of the world, WHO reported that **Tramadol** – a pain medicine widely used in places where legal access to morphine is limited – should not be placed under control, citing evidence indicating placing the drug under international control would diminish legitimate therapeutic access. This is an overt condemnation of the international drug control policy's adverse impact on access to medicine.

WHO also made bold recommendations on **synthetic cannabinoids** declaring they are far more harmful than Cannabis, have no apparent redeeming medical utility. Yet, WHO recommended a far less restrictive placement under the Treaties compared to *Cannabis*.

A great many NGOs, *Cannabis* policy reform advocates, industry representatives, patients, doctors and scientists from every corner of the globe made the travel to witness this historical UN session.

When the time came to release the findings on *Cannabis* to the packed audience, all were stunned to watch, in person, the spokesperson for WHO announce that the outcome on *Cannabis* was kept confidential, but did not announced any date for the release.

Over the last 60 years of the UN discussing drug policies this is the very first time that data, requested by the UN and countries, is left out of this special hearing. After close to 3-years of this *Cannabis* Review process such behavior is difficult to understand. Advocates that came from as far as South Africa to witness the release of the report were visibly shaken by the lack of courage displayed by the WHO.

According to Kenzi Riboulet-Zemouli, a leader in the FAAAT organization, “we are terribly disappointed that yet again the World Health Organization has decided not to obey their own rules and guidelines”, Kenzi continued “countries need time to understand and endorse these recommendations before the final (simple majority) vote to accept or reject them, next March”

Michael Krawitz, senior advisor to FAAAT feels that “this decision to withhold the results of the Critical Review of Cannabis appears to be politically motivated.” Krawitz continued “The WHO has been answering many questions about Cannabis legalization, which is not within their mandate, I hope the WHO shows courage and stands behind their work on *Cannabis*, findings we expect to be positive based upon recent WHO statements and their other actions today.” It is unclear if this will adversely affect their recommendations which, if their decisions on Tramadol and synthetic cannabinoids are any guide, should also be bold.”

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