



November 11, 2016

Dr. Margaret Chan
Director-General of WHO

CC: Secretary Gilles Forte
Expert Committee on Drug Dependence

Dear Dr. Chan,

I am writing to express my concern and disappointment about the provisional agenda for the 38th meeting of the Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD). The only reference of cannabis and cannabis resin is an “update”. In April, I reached out to you due to the role the World Health Organization (WHO), and in particular its ECDD, have in the medical, scientific and public health evaluation of psychoactive substances under the international drug control treaties and requested the urgent need for a critical review of cannabis by this Committee.

In the same letter, I shared the document *Cannabis and Cannabis Resin Critical Review Preparation Document*: <http://american-safe-access.s3.amazonaws.com/criticalreviewFINAL.pdf> that was created by dozens of global experts and medical cannabis stakeholders to help guide the ECDD’s critical review of cannabis. Using over 300 references, our document thoroughly examined the vast research on the therapeutic value of cannabis, accurate accounts of toxicology and related public health concerns. The report includes a summary of the variety of ways cannabis is controlled nationally and internationally, and the policies that are needed to make safe and legal access to medical cannabis available to all patients who would benefit from it.

As you know, cannabis is included in Schedules I and IV of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. The drugs in Schedule IV are those considered as having particularly dangerous properties and lacking therapeutic value. However, cannabis is now used for medical purposes by more than two million patients in several countries. Unfortunately, in many other countries, the use of cannabis for medical and scientific purposes is prevented due to its present obsolete scheduling status under the 1961 Convention.

In 2009, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in its Resolution 52/5 asked for an updated report on cannabis by the ECDD. In 2013, the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), in its annual report, invited the WHO, in view of its mandate under the 1961 Convention, to evaluate the potential medical utility of cannabis as well as its possible dangers to human health. Despite these requests, the ECDD has of yet not been able to conduct the critical review of cannabis and to make any recommendation to the CND regarding its scheduling status.

In order for the ECDD to advise on the future control status of cannabis, the Committee will need to create a critical review of cannabis. We trust that the ECDD will be able to recommend to the CND, as a minimum, to exclude cannabis from Schedule IV of the 1961 Convention. However, in order to move forward, the ECDD



must include a **pre-review of cannabis** on the agenda of the 38th meeting trust that the members of the ECDD will modify the agenda of their 38th meeting accordingly.

I would like to ask you to share this e-mail with all members of the ECDD for the purpose of a pre-review as well as a critical review of cannabis..

We remain at the disposal of the secretariat of WHO for any clarifications that could facilitate the use of this document by the ECDD.

I thank you, Madam, for your careful consideration of this very important toward the needs of patients around the world who would benefit from the medical use of cannabis.

Sincerely,

Steph Sherer

Co-chair, International Medical Cannabis Patient Coalition
Executive Director, Americans for Safe Access