



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on December 13, 2013

UN Claims Uruguay Not Allowed to End Marijuana Prohibition

As the United Nations, which is [widely ridiculed as the “dictators club,”](#) becomes increasingly bold in [purporting to dictate policy to nations and governments,](#) the controversial global body is now under fire from many of its traditional allies after claiming that Uruguay’s recent decision to end marijuana prohibition violates “international law.” The United Nation’s claim about Uruguayan drug laws follows recent demands by it that Obama [defy state voters and the U.S. Constitution to smash cannabis legalization](#) in American states.



With the recent decision to end decades of pot prohibition in Uruguay making it the first entire nation to take the step, analysts widely anticipate similar efforts around the world to accelerate. Already, voters in Colorado and Washington state [have completely nullified the federal and international marijuana regimes,](#) and other states have come close. Across Latin America and Europe, meanwhile, drug policy more broadly [has been hotly debated,](#) with at least two nations so far — Portugal and the Czech Republic — decriminalizing all drugs.

In response to the trends, UN narcotics bureaucrats, whose generous tax-funded salaries depend on the perpetuation of the war on various plants and substances, have responded with outrage and concern. UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) boss Yuri Fedotov, an ex-Soviet diplomat, for example, called the Uruguayan government’s decision “unfortunate.” In a [press release,](#) UN drug czar Fedotov also suggested that confronting problems associated with prohibited substances was dependent on following his global bureaucracy’s agenda.

“Just as illicit drugs are everyone’s shared responsibility, there is a need for each country to work closely together and to jointly agree on the way forward for dealing with this global challenge,” the former communist functionary said in a statement cited on the UN “News” Center. A spokesman for Fedotov’s UNODC added: “It is unfortunate that, at a time when the world is engaged in an ongoing discussion on the world drug problem, Uruguay has acted ahead of the special session of the U.N. General Assembly planned for 2016.”

Uruguayan lawmakers, in defiance of UN warnings and five decades of international prohibition, decided to buck the UN by abolishing legal prohibitions on the growing, distribution, and consumption of cannabis. Lawmakers and authorities said it was part of an effort aimed at attacking violence and drug cartels, which reap major profits in the black market. The plan was originally proposed by Uruguayan president and former communist guerilla José Mujica.

Another top UN drug warrior, International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) boss Raymond Yans, said he was “surprised” that Uruguay’s legislature “knowingly decided to break the universally agreed and internationally endorsed legal provisions of the treaty.” He also claimed the purpose of the UN



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prohibition regime, which he alleged “requires” the obedience of national authorities, was to “protect the health and welfare of humankind.” With the UN’s drug warriors [recently admitting that drug use had not declined despite decades of prohibition and hundreds of billions spent](#), it was not immediately clear how humankind was being protected.

The UN INCB, a self-styled “quasi-judicial body” charged with overseeing the global drug war, has also been demanding that the Obama administration unconstitutionally continue waging war on the plant and its users in states across America that have approved its use for medical and recreational purposes — about half, so far. “Implementing the decisions of popular votes held in the United States in Colorado and Washington to allow for the recreational use of cannabis would be a violation of international laws,” the INCB claimed in statement earlier this year. Despite those demands, however, multiple states, including the two in question, have continued to move forward with various plans to end or relax prohibition.

Saying it “regretted” Uruguay’s decision, the international drug board also claimed that “the legislation to legalize production, sale and consumption of cannabis for non-medical purposes approved yesterday in Uruguay contravenes the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, to which Uruguay is a party.” The outfit then went on to demand that authorities in the small South American nation “engage with the board with a view to ensure that Uruguay continues to respect and implement the treaties to which it is a party.”

While it is not yet clear what actions the UN may take against Uruguay to enforce the prohibition regime, if any, some drug war advocates are calling for tough measures. “There is no doubt that this move violates international law, and the UN does have enforcement power,” [claimed](#) Kevin Sabet, a prohibition supporter who advised various U.S. administrations on drug policy. “So the ball is in their court. I think they need to make it clear that violating international law cannot be ignored.” What “enforcement” powers the UN purports to wield was also not immediately clear.

On the other hand, advocates for ending prohibition celebrated the move, saying it would help reduce crime and protect human rights in Uruguay. Numerous American organizations said the scheme should serve as a model and inspiration for other national governments in the region and worldwide seeking to crack down on criminal syndicates and drug war-related violence. Analysts on all sides of the issue said they expect the trend toward new policies on the plant to continue accelerating in the coming years.

According to statements by UN drug warriors and other proponents of prohibition, citing studies, marijuana may be harmful to one’s health. “Cannabis is not only addictive but may also affect some fundamental brain functions, IQ potential, and academic and job performance and impair driving skills,” the INCB said in a statement, claims that have been contradicted by some scientists. Other prohibition advocates consider the recreational use of the plant to be immoral, though not all agree on what policy measures should be employed, if any.

Ironically, perhaps, the smashing of pot prohibition in Uruguay was backed by UN zealot and billionaire financier George Soros, often characterized by critics as a nefarious statist dedicated to building what he calls a “New World Order.” Some analysts have [suggested](#) Soros’ financial interests in [genetic-engineering giant Monsanto](#), which is reportedly considering entry into the marijuana market, may have played a role. The billionaire himself said he supported it as an “experiment” in the drive to find alternatives to the so-called war on drugs.

The UN-mandated global prohibition regime has come [under increasing scrutiny](#) in recent years. Public



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opinion around the world, and especially in the United States, has been shifting rapidly. Numerous national governments and prominent figures, meanwhile, have called for new approaches to dealing with marijuana and other generally banned substances. However, the UN's drug warriors have staunchly resisted alternatives, calling instead for a [dramatically expanded global war](#), as well as more power and money for international bureaucrats to lead it.

In the United States, the administration has so far refused to entirely acknowledge the legitimacy of state nullification efforts on the issue. However, despite strong warnings and opposition from the UN, the Justice Department [adopted "guidelines"](#) this year purporting to allow regulated marijuana-market schemes to move forward under close federal scrutiny. Whether national governments will continue to defy the increasingly power hungry UN remains to be seen, but according to analysts, it appears that the planetary outfit will eventually end up on the losing side of the prohibition battle.

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