



"Implementation of the International Drug Control Treaties"

We the people of Jamaica and CARICOM's Civil Society groups remain very disappointed that the review of the International Drug Control Treaties didn't go further in regards to the recognition of cultural and traditional rights to use certain plants, such as cannabis. It is our strong belief that the recognition of cultural rights, is a critical element of any sustainable development approach in our region.

In regions such as the Caribbean the use of cannabis has been historical, as there have been a number of traditional communities and groups such as the Maroons, Indians and Rastafarians who have grown up using the plant as a traditional remedy for various ailments. The Maroons communities (descendants of runaway African Slaves) across the Caribbean used cannabis as well as other plants to treat various illnesses. The Indian Descendant Communities has historical used cannabis in the celebration of various festivals in their communities and worship. The Indian Labourers integrated their practices and culture within the existing African culture that has strengthened and enriched the lives and health of the Caribbean people. It is unfortunate that these cultural variation was not taken fully into consideration.

Additionally, the Rastafarian communities that evolved across the Caribbean region over the years have used cannabis not only as medicine, but also as sacrament and food. It was important therefore that these various cultural dynamics should have been taken into consideration, as we sought to establish a more sustainable approach to the Implementation of the International Drug Control Treaties. It is indeed unfortunate that this was not taken into consideration.

It should have also been taken into consideration that most contemporary medicines originated from these traditional medicine and practices, as such it is critical that international treaties recognise role of cultural medicines and practices.

Finally, it is also critical to make the point that when these Drug Control Treaties were first introduced they were established on the premise of discrimination and prejudices towards certain cultures and people, and their colonial nature. We the people of the Caribbean do hope that at some point in the future the CND and our world leaders will seek to correct those mistakes, and accept that there are various cultures that use so called "drug plants" culturally, as medicines, food and sacrament.