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**STATEMENT OF KEVIN A. SABET, PHD.**

**PRESIDENT, SAM**

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Your Excellencies, board. Thank you so much for agreeing to have me at the Vienna NGO committee, also for selecting me as one of the speakers today. I'm very humbled to be in front of you. Of most respect for the International Narcotics Control Board. I think we're in some very challenging times right now with a small group of organizations that are really pushing for the legalization the non medical use of all drugs, not just cannabis, but of course, having started with cannabis.

I am a former three time White House drug policy adviser and have been able to represent the United States at the Commission numerous times. I'm currently not in government. I am the President and CEO of Sam Smart Approaches to Marijuana, as well as affiliated with Yale Medical School. I'm going to present to you a few slides that I think captures some of the data that we have been seeing mainly in the United States with regards to our now ten year experiment. You can call it the legalization of cannabis.

Of course, it's not really an experiment because we're not really following the data like we should, but some people will call it that. I think it's important to understand that three separate issues are often conflated, and that's, of course, the decriminalization or the issue of do we penalize drug users. And of course, we know that under the three conventions, there is wide latitude among countries, among nations, and signatories in terms of how they want to treat individual users. That, of course, is very different than the medicinal use and the legitimate medicinal use for research purposes, which, of course, the conventions have a clear delineation for. And then really the third issue is the main issue I think we're talking about today, the legalization and commercialization of the sales, use and manufacture of illicit substances.

And again, I'm going to draw the experiences from the United States with cannabis, because when we legalize, when some States legalize cannabis here in the US, we saw the explosion of products very high in potency. No state really has yet to be able to successfully limit that potency. And we're now seeing the kinds and types of cannabis that we never saw in the illicit market. This is only a product of the commercialization. I think that's one particular issue we need to remember is that when any drug is commercialized and legalized, the marketplace is able to innovate when it's above board and it's able to

innovate and create new products that are frankly, more addictive maybe than some of the products on the illicit market.

And it really reckons in my mind in the United States right now to the early days of big tobacco. When you look 100 years ago, what big Tobacco was saying, the case they were making to the population, we see a similar case that big marijuana is making mainly we don't know what the research says. It's probably good for you. There's no reason why you shouldn't use. These are actually very similar arguments that the marijuana industry is doing.

And now we've basically seen that the tobacco industry has morphed into the big marijuana industry. It's the same players, major international global companies that are out there buying the marijuana companies. And again, it's following this addiction for profit model. And that's really the model that you have to follow if you are if you've legalized drugs, because the more money you make, you will make it from those who use your product the most. So you're not going to make money from occasional users.

And in fact, in Colorado, we know that 30% of the users consume 87% of the volume of cannabis. So, again, you don't need everyone to consume a lot, but you need a significant proportion, even minority, to be the regular consumers. And that's addiction for profit because they are profiting off of that addiction. And in the United States, we've seen the number of daily non daily users skyrocket. In fact, the proportion of daily users of cannabis among past month users is close to 50%.

That's astonishing. It's much higher than the number for alcohol, and it's really higher than the number for any other drug. We've seen around 14 to 16 million. And that's conservative daily cannabis users and explosion of daily use in the US, that's really where we've seen the increase, not among occasional users, but among daily users. And we're seeing why we have an industry that's completely targeting our youth with coupons and billboards and advertisements.

And of course, we know that some countries have been able to limit advertisements, let's say, of tobacco, but other countries have not. We're seeing increases in hospitalizations in multiple States. These are just a few. We are seeing a very small proportion of tax revenue is part of the budget. So in all of these States and others, it's really less than 1% of the budgets it has to do with cannabis.

So this isn't like we're legalizing it, regulating it. And we're able to pay for more programs as a result because it's so minuscule. What we have seen is an increase, for example, in workplace positivity of THC ever since the States legalized cannabis. So we're seeing more problems at the workplace. We're seeing more accidents at the workplace.

We're seeing more car crashes on the roads. And that's why the largest traffic safety organization in the United States, the AAA Automobile Agency, opposes the legalization of marijuana for what they call recreational use because of the inherent traffic safety risks. And so we've seen these increases. We've also seen increases in calls to poison control centers, poison centers in multiple States that have legalized. So you actually have to put more resources into the staffing there.

And we're saying that although there's been a downward trend in overall youth substance use, especially in the United States, study after study is showing that legalization is actually reversing that downward trend. Some people will try and tell you that we haven't seen an increase in use as a result of legalization, but I don't think the data bears that out at all. In fact, the daily use among 12th graders, high school seniors in the United States has risen dramatically since we've started to legalize drugs. We have studies showing the prevalence of marijuana use disorder in children aged twelve to 17 has increased by 25% after recreational legalization. We have multiple States that have shown increases, significant increases in youth marijuana use in the last few years.

And we have studies now showing that the opioid crisis appears to be worsening where marijuana has been legalized. This was in the JAMA. Internal medicine, as I was referring to earlier, marijuana impaired driving fatalities are skyrocketing. So we are seeing the early effects again. After about ten years in Colorado and Washington, about eight years in Oregon and Alaska, and about six years in States like California and Massachusetts.

We are seeing this effect. And of course, we know that it doesn't stop with cannabis. So the same groups that have legalized marijuana have now moved towards what they're calling decriminalization, but it's really legalization, at least of possession in places like Oregon. They're also moving on to the psychedelics, what they're calling medical psilocybin.

And they're also allowing injection sites as the next step, as well as a push to legalize overall, the psychedelics. And I think that really is the next frontier. It's a psychedelics. It's heroin. It's other drugs that this does not stop with cannabis.

So we've seen, of course, self appointed commissions that talked about how we need a new approach. And that new approach sounds very nice. It's wrapped in very nice rhetoric, but in reality is, I think, a very dangerous one. And it's one that we've seen already early data showing we've seen some places in the world, like in British Columbia, we've seen this concept of the safe supply of drugs. So they're calling it a medical supply, even if it's really for non medical use.

And this is, for example, heroin that's being passed out openly. It's not stopped by the authorities at all in Canada. I think we have to really go back to the solutions that we know can work if we scale them up. Prevention, intervention and treatment recovery, smart enforcement, and of course, international cooperation, international interdiction international efforts. I very much worry about this push to legitimize drugs.

You can get many more resources like our lessons learned document, which is on our website@[www.learnaboutsam.org](http://www.learnaboutsam.org). And of course, if any of you would like to reach out, my email personally is [Kevin@learnaboutsam.org](mailto:Kevin@learnaboutsam.org). But again, I just have to say that we remain very worried about the legitimization of the commercialization of drugs. We've seen that, by the way, the illicit market has not gone away. The illicit market is thriving in legal States because you're able to undercut the legal price and

be open whenever you want and not have a license the other thing we've seen that I'm very worried about is really nonexistent regulation how States are completely ill equipped to ensure safety and labeling and product assurances.

Thank you.