

## STATEMENT

My name is Zara Snapp and I am pleased to make this statement on behalf of Instituto RIA in México and Acción Técnica Social in Colombia.

Today I will be speaking about the changes in the cocaine market and also briefly speak to the new psychoactive substances that are emerging in the Colombian and Latin American markets.

In 2016, Acción Técnica Social, in collaboration with the Externado University, began exploring, discussing, and documenting potential scenarios for cocaine regulation by 2034. Our 2018 study identified 26 change factors, five strategic variables, and 35 key actors influencing regulation. We created scenarios for 2022, 2028, and 2034, outlining necessary actions and technological developments that would occur during each scenario.

Our research concluded that the illegal adult cocaine market is a significant threat to sustainable peace in Colombia due to the violence associated with prohibition. We advocate for future-focused policies, including legal regulation, to promote peace and social justice.

We found that regulation models for substances like cannabis and medical heroin have yielded positive results in health, economic development, and security. The adult cocaine market, with about 22 million users, demands better production conditions and quality. Governments can regulate risky substances, and over 84% of surveyed cocaine users are willing to pay more for fair and sustainable products. This suggests economic gains could be more equitably distributed across the production chain.

The five strategic variables identified in the study are:

- Sustainable and just commercial models
- Changes in global cocaine consumption
- Violence and drug trafficking
- Qualitative and quantitative information systems for decision-making and
- Public health and human rights-based policy formulation

The 2022 "Point of Inflection" scenario predicted increased knowledge about consumption trends, greater interest in research around the multiple uses of the coca leaf and a critical review of the coca leaf. Non-state actors would continue to profit and maintain a strong presence within the region and production would maintain stable. Now that we have passed this scenario, we can clearly state that the prospective study forecast correctly.

The 2028 "Change on the Horizon" scenario envisioned a public health-oriented regulatory model, nascent legal frameworks for coca and cocaine use, harm reduction approaches, and international cooperation on cocaine regulation which can be witnessed with possible inter se agreements across countries. The study forecast that consumer preferences would lean towards fair market characteristics, such as "violence-free" cocaine which is something witnessed in online drug markets.

The 2034 "Step by Step" scenario anticipated Colombia developing a public policy regulating the entire production chain with a public health and human rights framework. Diverse

stakeholders, including the Ministries of Health and Justice, academia, political parties, cultivating communities, pharmaceutical companies, and Indigenous communities, would collaborate on market regulation of the coca leaf and cocaine.

Current changes, such as increased research on coca leaf uses and the WHO critical review, are accompanied by challenges like the assassination of social leaders involved in crop substitution programs. Political will is also growing in other regions to provide a safe supply of substances.

The dynamic opioid market and the introduction of substances, like fentanyl and nitazenes, highlight the urgent need for action against the health consequences of prohibition. To address issues around the overdose crisis, organizations such as Instituto RIA have proposed that offer lower-risk products such as the production and exportation of opium gum could be an option to provide harm reduction based options to people who currently use opioids, as well as greater economic opportunities to communities that have traditionally cultivated poppy plants and that are also suffering the economic consequences of the influx of fentanyl and other synthetic substances into illegal drug markets.

On the other hand, New Psychoactive Substances enter the market because they are more compact, easier to transport, less likely to be detected because of smell or size or are more profitable. This means that governments attempt to schedule substances as quickly as possible, while the market, more rapidly, brings out new substances. The institutional frustration is palpable.

Since 2017, Acción Técnica Social, has been advising people who use drugs and institutions in Colombia on the introduction of a cocktail of substances known as “tusi”, not to be confused with the psychedelic 2C-B. “Tusi”, which has been found across Latin America and even made its way to Europe, tends to be a mixture of primarily ketamine and MDMA, along with flavors and coloring to make it more attractive. As it gains popularity, we must take a realistic approach, recognizing the necessity of offering harm reduction interventions to people who use drugs, primarily for personal, adult or recreational purposes, including drug checking programs that will help them to make decisions around dosing and identify any additional adulterants in the drug supply which can include caffeine or more recently, benzodiazepines.

The INCB and other international bodies should consider applying prospective methodologies in order to evaluate, together with diverse stakeholders, including civil society organizations, whether the path which is currently being undertaken is “fit for purpose”. As we witness and prepare for new substances, primarily synthetic, that could potentially replace plant-based substances, the work of the Board and Member States becomes ever more complex.

We want to keep people safe, but we also live in a world where people use drugs and have for milenia. According to the world drug report, the majority of people who use drugs do so without causing problems in our personal or professional lives. This information should give us food for thought. Are we promoting policies that make people safer? Or are our current approaches exposing people to greater risks because of an adulterated drug supply? Are people who use drugs becoming more politicized and does that open an opportunity to how

psychoactive substances are produced and distributed, to think about equitable distribution of economic gains of illegal markets, human rights and social justice? The INCB, together with Member States, has the opportunity to support and encourage research into developing new scenarios. Civil society is here to accompany those processes in order to generate evidence that centers policies that support well-being and human rights.