

THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR DRUG POLICY REFORM



THE BECKLEY FOUNDATION

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OBJECTIVES

- *To promote health-oriented, harm-reducing drug policies based on scientific evidence and human rights.*
- *To support the rational redistribution of resources away from prohibition, criminalisation and incarceration towards healthcare, education and rehabilitation.*
- *To reduce the human costs, violence and corruption fuelled by the illicit drug trade and the War on Drugs, which disproportionately affect the producer/transit countries.*
- *To bring together country representatives and scientific and policy experts in order to discuss and evolve new policy options that address the highly complex problems arising from drug use and the illegal markets.*
- *To commission and disseminate new information; to open up and facilitate debate on all possible policy options; and to educate and inform politicians and the public.*

TIME FOR CHANGE

The 50-year War on Drugs has failed.

Despite governments spending globally in excess of \$100 billion a year on fighting the War on Drugs, there has been a clear long-term pattern of increasing availability and use. The unintended consequences of the current policies include ever-growing health problems; soaring levels of crime, violence and corruption throughout the world; discrimination; and widespread abuses of human rights. The illicit drug trade is now the third most valuable industry in the world, estimated to be worth \$450 billion per year, all in the hands of criminals.

Improving our drug policy is one of the key policy challenges of our time. Let us break the taboo on debate and reform. The time for action is now.

INFORMING THE PUBLIC

The Beckley Foundation is co-ordinating a global media campaign to inform both politicians and the public about the failures of the current system of prohibition and the potential benefits of a rational, evidence-based approach to drug policy. To augment this campaign, the Beckley Foundation will launch a dedicated *campaign* website in late Spring 2012.

THE LAUNCH OF THE INITIATIVE

The Beckley Foundation's *Global Initiative for Drug Policy Reform* was launched in November 2011 at the House of Lords in London, at a Meeting hosted together with the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Drug Policy Reform. The *Initiative* promotes an evidence-based approach to drug policy, where all options are open for discussion. It also opens the debate on possible ways to reform the UN Drug Conventions, which currently severely constrain countries wishing to reform their domestic drug policies.

At the House of Lords Meeting, evidence was presented by:

- high-level representatives of countries which have already experimented with alternative policies
- members of the Global Commission on Drug Policy and other experts.

For the *Initiative*, **the Beckley Foundation commissioned two important Reports**, preliminary findings of which were discussed at the Meeting:

1. REWRITING THE UN DRUG CONVENTIONS

This ground-breaking report, led by Professor Robin Room, is the first to carefully document the ways in which the UN Conventions can be amended in order to allow signatory countries the freedom to choose and experiment with domestic policies best suited to their special needs. The report provides the blueprint for achieving two main policy options:

- to **clearly decriminalise** the use and possession of small amounts of controlled drugs for personal consumption
- to **strictly regulate and tax** the domestic market in one or more controlled substances, most likely starting with cannabis and coca leaf.

2. A COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS OF A REGULATED AND TAXED CANNABIS MARKET IN THE UK

This Report, by Professor Stephen Pudney, is the first-ever analysis of its kind, and will provide valuable economic data.

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AN OVERVIEW



BACKGROUND

The Beckley Foundation was founded by Amanda Feilding in 1998, with the goal of reforming drug policy by promoting evidence-based, health-oriented, harm-reducing, cost-effective policies which respect human rights. It is now a leading international drug policy think-tank, with its work and publications disseminated worldwide. The Beckley Foundation is in the unique position of having substantial credibility in both the scientific and political arenas for its original work in both fields.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Among the achievements of the Beckley Foundation are:

- The initiation of the *Rational Scale of Harm for Drugs* in 2003, later developed by Professor David Nutt *et al.*, and published in the *Lancet* in 2007.
- Pioneering scientific research carried out in collaboration with academic partners such as Imperial College London, The Institute of Psychiatry, University College London, Johns Hopkins University USA and Oxford University, among others. The results have generated many publications in international peer-reviewed journals.
- The establishment in 2004/5 of the *International Drug Policy Consortium* (IDPC) and the *International Society for the Study of Drug Policy* (ISSDP), now both important independent organisations.
- The commissioning of over 35 much-cited drug policy books, reports, briefing papers and proceedings documents.
- The convening, in 2006, of the *Beckley Foundation's Global Cannabis Commission*, whose *Report* was later co-published with Oxford University Press as *Cannabis Policy: Moving beyond stalemate*. This was the first Report to produce an overview of global cannabis policy.

The *Report* drew attention to the fact that cannabis was totally ignored at international drug policy forums such as the UN, even though without it the War on Drugs would collapse, as cannabis users represent 80% of the illegal drug trade. The *Report* provided a blueprint for reform with the new *Draft Framework Convention on Cannabis Control*.

SEMINARS

Since 2003, the Beckley Foundation has organised a series of international seminars entitled *Society and Drugs: A Rational Perspective*, mainly held at the House of Lords. These events have been very influential in educating the thought leaders by presenting cutting-edge, rational overviews of the issues surrounding the use and abuse of drugs, both legal and illegal, and in promoting evidence-based approaches to global drug policy.

These seminars brought together international politicians and experts to produce and discuss papers on:

- the comparative effectiveness of current policies and the investigation of alternative policy options
- how the UN Drug Conventions could be reformed so that individual countries have more freedom to explore alternative policies
- the importance of differentiating between different substances and different policy approaches for different countries
- the likely consequences of changes in legislation, and their implications for public health, law and order, and the economy
- the scientific evaluation of the effects of different drugs, and patterns of use, on the brain, behaviour and health
- how policies that emphasise treatment and harm-reduction yield better results than those that focus on criminalisation and incarceration.

REFLECTIONS

That which is prohibited cannot be regulated.

According to the UN's drugs watchdog, around 90% of drug-use is not problematic.

Current drug policies are mainly based on moral judgements and political ideology rather than scientific evidence and harm reduction.

The current prohibitionist approach impedes scientific research into the potential medical and therapeutic benefits of psychoactive substances.

It is essential to act soon to alleviate the corruption and violence in producer and transit countries.