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**BRITISH GROUP INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION**

**DRUG POLICY REFORM PARLIAMENTARY SEMINAR**

**PLENARY SESSION VI: DRUG POLICY CHANGES**

**BENOÎT GOMIS, ALISON HOLCOMB, SEBASTIAN SABINI and JAIME MARIO  
TROBO**

## Drug Policy Changes

[NATALIE BENNETT *in the Chair*]

**The Chair** welcomed everyone, explaining that Caroline Lucas MP was absent because she had to be in the House of Commons Chamber and that, as leader of the Green party of England and Wales, she was representing Caroline. She said that, in keeping with the Green party's evidence-based approach to drugs policy, one of Caroline's priorities when she was first elected as MP for Brighton, Pavilion, was to tackle the city's sad reputation as the drugs death capital of the UK. The Chair was pleased to report that it no longer had that title. Although drug use had remained high in the city, with more than 2,000 problem heroin and cocaine users, progress had been made, through a strong commitment to an evidence-based approach. Caroline had very much picked up that theme in her parliamentary work.

She said that despite successive British Governments being wedded to the war on drugs, many in the Houses of Parliament had advocated a more sensible strategy. That was not an easy position to take, especially for MPs who relied on public opinion and the support of their voters. Caroline recently embarked on the setting up of a drugs commission to establish whether the city of Brighton and Hove, where her constituency was based, could do more to reduce drug-related harms. The Chair said that the focus on an evidence-based approach had helped to bring critics on board, as had engagement with supportive local police and a range of professionals. There was a political risk that this would be presented as being soft on drugs, which would play into people's understandable fears and the widespread misconceptions around drug use.

She said that when the drugs commission recommended that the city ought to consider setting up a safe drugs consumption facility, Caroline was especially conscious of the importance of advocating an honest, objective debate on the subject, and of the need to curtail the inflammatory media headlines about "shooting galleries" seen in various parts of the world. In times of austerity, one of the most powerful arguments concerned value for money, yet in the UK there had never been a cost-benefit analysis of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, so it was not known whether the money used to enforce it was well spent. Decisions about drugs policy were separate from the usual considerations of how else to spend public money.

She said that the Green party had been campaigning for an impact assessment of the Act to find out the costs involved, and that the party's petition was heading towards having enough signatures to force a parliamentary debate. The focus on value for money was really important, and she looked forward to hearing from the experts who had successfully navigated the minefields of public opinion on drugs policy.

She said that the session also concerned the effect of drugs policy changes on regional security and counter-narcotics policies. One concern often raised in Brighton and Hove when it came to advocating an approach based on reducing drug-related harms and the decriminalisation of drug use was that it had knock-on implications, and drug users would flock to the city and surrounding areas, making the job of the police more difficult. She asked whether there was any evidence for such assertions, and asked about the likely consequences for counter-narcotics policing, as opposed to local policing concerned with the effects of drug use.

### Politics and Public Attitudes to Drug Policy Reform

*Speaker: Alison Holcomb*, Criminal Justice Director, American Civil Liberties Union.

*Alison Holcomb* said that Washington state had passed an historic measure that for the first time brought the production and distribution of cannabis under a system of licensing and regulatory control. The problem in America started with mass incarceration. One in 100 adults in the United States were behind bars, and one in 31 were on some form of correctional control. The war on drugs had been the primary driver of the significant increase in incarceration since the early 1980s. Arrests for simple marijuana possession in the state of Washington over the past 20 years had increased significantly. That represented roughly \$20 million a year in arrest, prosecution, defence and court administration costs.

She said that the impact of marijuana law enforcement in the USA and Washington state was borne disproportionately by people of colour. An African-American in the state of Washington was three times as likely to be arrested, three times as likely to be charged and three times as likely to be convicted of a marijuana offence as a white person, despite the fact that whites in the state of Washington used marijuana at a slightly higher rate than African-Americans.

On what moved voters and public support, she said that we first had to acknowledge that voters were very cool on marijuana. Only 24% of Washington state voters reported any positive feelings about marijuana, and most people reported negative feelings about it. When alcohol prohibition was repealed in 1933, it was not done on a platform that said that gin was good for you. The question was whether voters liked marijuana laws. That was where the debate focused in the state of Washington. Voters agreed that the marijuana laws had failed, were ineffective and were not achieving the policy goals for which they had been adopted. Moreover, those laws were wasting resources that had been allocated to public safety, law enforcement, prosecution and courts, and that could be used on higher priorities, such as combating violent crime, an important matter in the state of Washington.

She said that voters in Washington state wanted more tax revenue for the services that they appreciated. They were especially fond of so-called sin taxes—taxes paid only by the people purchasing luxury or vice items, and not levied across the population. Only those people who wanted to buy marijuana had to pay the taxes that would support programmes. In Washington, voters liked the idea of taking money away from criminals. It was important for them to see not only that money would be used for better purposes within domestic public safety priorities, but that money that was flowing into the black market would be brought under regulatory control.

She said that the message that resonated most deeply with Washington state voters was that treating marijuana use as a crime had failed. However, that was insufficient by itself; it was not enough for people to throw up their hands and say, “The war on drugs has failed; we ought to surrender and move on.” Rather, voters wanted to hear that there was a concrete proposal for how to achieve strong public health and safety outcomes. They wanted to know the alternative to the war on drugs, so the campaign became known as the “New Approach”.

She said that the message of “New Approach” was that it could deliver as good, if not better, public safety and health outcomes as prohibition. The message was important, but so was having the right messengers. As an attorney who worked for the American Civil Liberties Union in Washington state, she was not the best messenger to deliver a public safety message and reassurance to the voters of the state, so the campaign had reached out to leaders of public safety enforcement agencies, as well as public health advocates.

She said that Dr Kim Thorburn was the regional health director for Spokane County, a major county east of the mountains in Washington state. They had talked about what features of the measure—Initiative 502—would be directed towards producing those better public health outcomes. The sin tax applied within Initiative 502 was mostly dedicated to health care, the general fund and local budgets that supported law enforcement, youth drug

prevention and marijuana public health education, ensuring that education was provided to consumers about the risks to safety and health.

She said that the income was also dedicated to evaluation and research. Delegates had heard earlier that very few jurisdictions had carried out a cost-benefit analysis of their drug policies. A cost-benefit analysis of Initiative 502 was to be undertaken, and the taxes would fund that research and evaluation. Funds would also go to programme administration to ensure that agencies had resources.

She said that, following the campaign, 20 out of 39 counties were won in Washington state. She showed delegates a map that showed that the campaign had crossed over what was known in Washington state as the Cascade curtain. The Cascade mountains separated east from west Washington. Eastern Washington tended to be much more conservative and western more liberal. The campaign had won counties on both sides.

She said she was happy to share her PowerPoint presentation with anyone interested in looking at what messages had made the most sense to voters. People had been asked to volunteer the reasons why they voted for Initiative 502. The responses had been open-ended.

She said that Initiative 502 ultimately passed with 55.7% of the vote in Washington state, which was roughly 1.7 million voters. President Obama had taken 56.1%, just half a percentage point more than Initiative 502 in the state of Washington. It had done four points better than Referendum 74, the marriage equality initiative that had been on the ballot at the same time. It had done a full four points better than Governor Jay Inslee, the Democrat candidate for governor. Amendment 64 in Colorado—a similar measure to Initiative 502—had done a little bit better than President Obama; Colorado was a swing state, with a more even split between conservative and liberal voters than Washington state. Washington was known as a true-blue liberal state.

She showed delegates a comparison between the demographics of the voters who had passed Amendment 64 in Colorado, and those of the voters who had passed Initiative 502. The Initiative 502 campaign had taken 39% of self-identified Republicans—the conservative party—which was a higher number than had ever been seen in public opinion research on conservative support for legalising marijuana. It had also taken 45% of voters over 65. By comparison, Colorado had done much better with younger voters aged 18 to 29, especially younger men. It had support from 70% of younger men, and 58% of men generally. Colorado's message was more about marijuana being safer than alcohol. That initiative had been drafted to appeal to the base, and especially to people in the medical marijuana industry, who were essentially offered a right of first refusal of licences, so that they could continue their businesses.

### **Regional Security and Counter-narcotics Policies**

*Speaker:* **Benoît Gomis**, International Security Programme, Chatham House.

**Benoît Gomis** said that it was humbling to be part of such a list of speakers and thanked the participants for their support. He was asked to expand on an article he wrote for *World Politics Review* with Claudia Hofmann on the implications of the Uruguay marijuana Bill for the region and the international debate. The article argued that developments in Colorado and Washington, the Organisation of American States report in May, the Uruguay marijuana Bill, and calls for marijuana regulation in Mexico City had broken the policy taboo on legalising and regulating drugs in the Americas.

He said that the three key challenges in making those changes sustainable in the long term and internationally were, first, the difficult political context in the Americas; secondly, the orthodox players internationally, who tended to favour prohibition and see the drugs problem through the lens of terrorism; and thirdly, the reluctance of European Governments to engage in a drug policy debate.

He said that there was growing consensus in the Americas that the war on drugs had failed, that drugs were primarily a health problem, not a criminal problem, and that drug use and possession should be decriminalised further. However, there was no consensus on what law enforcement should look like in a regulated market, whether supplies should be regulated, as they were in Uruguay, and what public health meant in practice in counties that had difficulty controlling and collecting taxes in parts of their territory.

He said that popular opinion in the Americas was still against the liberalisation of drug policy. In Uruguay in July 2013, 63% of the population was opposed to the Bill; in Mexico, 32% of the population was in favour of marijuana liberalisation, compared with 13% in Colombia and 11% in Peru. Another problem was a lack of political leadership. A year ago, Colombia was instrumental at the Summit of the Americas, and was among the three signatories to a joint statement to the UN calling for drug policy review at UN level. Juan Manuel Santos and his officials played a key role in bringing the drug policy debate to the table, and he convinced Obama that a review was needed. A year later, things looked more difficult. The presidential elections in March and the peace process with FARC and the ELN meant that Colombia was not the natural leader that it had been a year ago.

He said that Mexico was undertaking a series of ambitious reforms of its energy sector and its economic, taxation and fiscal policies. The Mexican Government's diplomatic efforts with the US were focused on immigration and gun control, not drugs. Guatemala was the third key player; it had been punching above its weight, but it was a small country, and it needed partners to make regional change.

He said that the US intelligence leaks might have had a negative impact on the political context. In Mexico, Felipe Calderón's e-mails, and presidential candidate Enrique Peña Nieto's text messages, were tracked. In Brazil, US agents spied on the communications of President Rousseff's aides and accessed her internet content. The political elite assumed that these things happened, but now that they were out in the open, Governments needed to be seen doing something about it. For those reasons, the environment was not ideal for renewing the focus on counter-narcotics policies.

He said that the second challenge was the orthodox players, such as China and Russia. Russia was concerned about the flow of drugs from Afghanistan after 2014, and was pushing for harsher counter-narcotics policies, despite their failure over the past decade. It was financing counter-narcotics training and programmes in its backyard. Countries in central America, Asia and Africa still advocated zero-tolerance policies for drug offences, and institutional players in international organisations, such as the International Narcotics Control Board, caused a lot of trouble. In West Africa, Afghanistan and central Asia, the drug problem was still seen primarily through the lens of the war on terror. It was positive that awareness had been raised about the issue. Terrorism was a hot topic, and positive anti-money laundering measures had been introduced. Overall, the focus had been too much on law enforcement and targeted killing at the expense of justice, public health and development.

He said that the third challenge was Europe's reluctance to engage in the drug policy debate, due to budgetary pressures, the rise in conservative opinion throughout Europe, and domestic issues such as unemployment and public debt. Those factors threatened the progress made in countries such as Portugal. There was a feeling that engaging in the international drug policy debate might jeopardise the progress achieved domestically.

He said that UK officials' claims that the decrease in cocaine consumption showed that prohibitionist policies were working ignored the international, interconnected nature of the drug problem. Drugs consumed in the UK were often produced in and transited through foreign countries, which generated organised crime and violence. In addition, the use of legal highs, over-the-counter medicine and prescription medication in the UK had increased in the past decade.

He said that despite those challenges, change was needed. The current approach had failed and caused more harm than good—Malcolm Gladwell would say that a tipping point had been reached. Current policies were not sustainable. There had been too much focus on law enforcement at the expense of development, public health and a socio-economic response to the problem. The reasons why people commit crimes such as drug trafficking should be addressed. Law enforcement strategies had been ineffective and counter-productive and disregarded human rights. Drug trafficking had fuelled corruption. The problems were not national but global, and there had been a lack of regional co-operation. The response was driven by fear of drugs themselves, and uncertainly about the impact of policy change.

He said that fear of change was human. Daniel Kahneman wrote about the subject in “Thinking Fast and Slow”; other behavioural economists had written on the topic, too. There were “sunk” costs; so much time, energy and money had been invested in these policies that we felt that we needed to continue with them so that the investment was not wasted. Also, the effects of losing were greater than the effects of winning, so there was a sentiment that there was more to lose than gain from drug policy reform. People often said that more research was needed, or that the drug issue was very complex—a wicked problem—but the complexity of the problem should not be used as an excuse for inaction and policy inertia.

### Case Studies (Uruguay)

*Speakers:* **Sebastian Sabini**, Member of the House of Representatives and President of the Select Committee on Drugs and Addictions, Uruguay, and **Jaime Mario Trobo**, Member of the House of Representatives, Uruguay.

*Sebastian Sabini* thanked the IPU for inviting him to speak. He said that a north American commander had said that the difference between a Conservative and someone more progressive was that a Conservative wanted change, but not right now. Part of the debate was wrong, because they were not analysing the consequences of illegal drugs. Prohibition generated many more problems than drugs themselves; it was not just a question of analysing the health consequences, even though they were a key issue.

He said that Uruguay was a small country, although it was good at football. It carried out much research and worked with the community. Its commission had worked with 50 delegations over the last three years. Stakeholders from the community, and specialists from the academic and medical fields and the legal profession, had participated. Those involved had dealt with treatments for addiction. National and international specialists had also taken part.

He said that one colleague had undertaken an important project, and it was a shame Turkish colleagues were not there, because they would have found it interesting. Analysis was done of cannabis and the consequences of its use. Uruguay therefore had much scientific knowledge of the effects of cannabis on users. That allowed Uruguay to understand that it now had drugs that were at least as harmful as cannabis.

He said that Uruguay was not jumping into the void; it was trying to base its policies on scientific evidence and on other countries' experiences of regulation. However, few countries

had gone as far as to regulate totally the supply chain, the production chain and everything involved. Uruguay had done that through a Bill that was pending approval by the Senate.

He said that drug use in Uruguay was not criminalised. The right to use drugs was protected. However, there was difficulty accessing drugs. People were in jail for possession. There were conflicts between gangs that trafficked drugs, and that affected the population. There were also health issues to take into consideration. Those three aspects were affected by the policies that were in place.

He said that there were 44 articles in the Bill. He would not go into each in detail, but he wanted to outline the Bill's objectives. First, those involved wanted to protect citizens' health. If cannabis was so bad, should we let drug traffickers define who they sell to and how much they sell, or should we regulate the market? That was the decision Uruguay faced.

He said that Uruguay wanted to minimise risk for young people and users. When a substance was regulated, its toxicity could be controlled. That happened in the case of alcohol. When consumers bought a bottle of wine, whisky or beer, they knew its strength or toxicity. That was possible because we controlled the quality, and there was traceability. However, it was different with drugs. Uruguay wanted to focus on that.

He said that information was important. There were many myths around cannabis—myths in favour and myths against—but none of them was good. Regulating cannabis allowed us to reduce risks. Uruguay was looking at different Bills associated with regulating alcohol. He said that there had been an increase in drug use. Young people had easy access to cannabis; that was the situation in which we found ourselves and the situation we wanted to change.

He said that the second article was about the state monopoly. That was what the state was aiming for through the rules that would be established. The aim was to protect people's rights. Some users' human rights were not being respected. It was not fair or acceptable to put someone in prison because they had a cannabis plant or 10 grams of cannabis.

He said that it was not an in-depth process taking place in Uruguay. It was a transit country, unlike other countries in Latin America. However, it needed to instigate change because it had faced failure until now. Families had been destroyed by drug policy, not the drugs themselves. People had been murdered because of the drug policy in place. People had lost their freedom because of it. No one went to prison for smoking or drinking. The problem was the consequences we generated with our policies. Uruguay wanted to protect people's rights.

He said that the law aimed to protect the country's citizens from the risk of being exposed to illegal trade and organised crime. Drugs were the main source of finance for organised crime. They financed the sale of arms, people trafficking and other illegal activities. The duty of leaders was to resolve people's problems, not follow questionnaires. Drug policies were letting people down in that sense, because organised crime was still rife and still financed by drug money.

He said that exceptions to prohibition included permitted plantations. He would allow industrial plantations, because there was hemp being grown and used in Uruguay that did not contain marijuana's hallucinogenic ingredient. Other substances had lower percentages of that hallucinogenic substance. Prohibition of hemp of that kind would be like prohibition of vineyards for wine production.

On therapeutic uses, both medicinal and scientific, he said that drug-use centres would keep use off the streets. Education was important; there was a need to provide access to information and to develop material on addiction. People had access to information through

the internet at work, but on public health, the issue was not legalisation or prohibition, but regulation. Licences and provisions needed to be established.

He said that he did not want cannabis to be sold to minors, and he did not propose a free market as in Colorado, where companies and the Government determined the conditions of sale. The use of particular substances was not to be promoted. Cannabis was not to be associated with friendship, wealth, power and luxury—values linked with tobacco and wine.

He said that companies should not benefit from addiction. That had a cost, and Uruguay was involved in court cases owing to attempts to regulate the tobacco market in more or less the same way, with a limit to smoking in public places. For minors, driving under the influence of cannabis was to be banned.

He said that he was not trying to promote use. People needed to be informed by publicity campaigns of the dangers of cannabis, which was something he had taken into consideration. He was now on only No. 5 of the 44 articles, but would not go through them all. Monitoring and governance of the policy was required. The House of Representatives and the Senate needed to be given an update by the technically and politically independent team on the policy's progress, because the decision was being taken jointly.

**The Chair** thanked Mr Sabini for his inspiring words and asked Jaime Mario Trobo to give his perspective.

*Jaime Mario Trobo* said that when the big issues generated controversy in society, countries and politicians needed to find consensus through dialogue and formulas that reached the majority of the population. Unanimity was not possible, but overall agreement for legal solutions was the only way to make good and efficient policies.

He said that surveys showed public opinion at one point in time and that while politicians took action based on polls, they were also individuals in touch with public opinion. As a result, they formed part of the legal solutions. In Uruguay, the harm reduction Bill on marijuana consumption had not been approved, despite its intense international promotion, but it was close to approval and it was assumed that it would pass in the coming months, because the governing party, which had an absolute majority in the House of Representatives and the Senate, had obliged legislators to bring forward a vote.

He said that public opinion, which was measured by many pollsters, was mostly against the Bill—some 64% were against it, with 26% in favour, while 10% had no opinion. Even among the voters who supported the Government, 53% were against the Bill. He said it was important that parliamentarians knew that most of the Uruguayan public was against the harm reduction policy, which will empower the state to produce and licence addictive drugs such as cannabis and marijuana.

He said that the seminar was not a place to air domestic questions, nor to debate positions, but pointed out that this policy, which had major implications for health, the development of behaviour, youth, the state and public administration, did not have universal consensus in society. On the contrary, the Government-supporting parliamentary majority had one view, while the Opposition took the opposite view. He said that the Bill included measures to defeat drug trafficking. It had nothing to do with liberal notions of recognising an individual's right to harm themselves by taking drugs, and nor that they could do so of their own free will. That was relevant because the concepts dominating the Bill could easily be applied to coca paste or cocaine itself, which were very harmful to young people.

He said that between 2010 and 2012 an all-party parliamentary commission in Uruguay, which Mr Sabini formed part of, studied not just cannabis addiction, but all aspects of

addiction in depth. Its conclusions did not include the solution that had driven the current Bill. He said that the Government had sent Parliament a Bill under which the state would control and regulate importation, production, procurement, storage, marketing and distribution of marijuana and its derivatives. He said that that was justified on the grounds that the Executive would contribute to reducing risks of harm among people who were using marijuana recreationally or medicinally, but having to obtain a supply from the illegal market.

He said that there would be an effect on the development of future generations and that minority interests of certain groups or sectors had been given greater weight by the Government. He said that the consequences of the experiment might be difficult to reverse because of the influence it might have on future generations. If a holistic approach was not taken, there would be a serious impact on public health, security and social integration. He said that prohibition was not necessarily an admission of failure, but that such a policy implemented in isolation could not succeed in reducing the impact of this social phenomenon.

He said that in Uruguay, according to the national drugs council, 230,000 Uruguayans were problem drug users, 52,000 were problem drug users of pharmaceuticals and 28,000 were problem cannabis users. The problem of reducing demand had not been seriously faced with regard to the two most relevant addictions: pharmaceuticals and alcohol, and nor had prevention education or dissuasion been seriously applied. On several occasions, resources to support rehabilitation initiatives had been denied. Such initiatives were often carried out by non-governmental organisations without state support, co-ordination or exchange of experiences. He said that such views were shared by community and social organisations.

He said that the measure would have international repercussions and would be influential. He said there would be problems with the Bill because it would contradict international legislation and conflict with the policies of other countries in the region. He said that the possession of marijuana was legal in Uruguay, but illegal in Brazil, and wondered how the Brazilian justice system would deal with Uruguayans found in possession of marijuana. He said that this law would not solve the problem.

He said that there was a problem that the state was assuming an inappropriate role in controlling the production and sale of cannabis, which could be extended to coca paste or cocaine tomorrow. He said that the Bill will end the state's duty to society regarding care and prevention in public health, and also promote a paradigm to new generations regarding the benign aspects of addiction to certain substances.

He said that when he had mentioned a media campaign to promote the benign effects of cannabis, George Soros had not known about it. Television adverts had stated that people felt that they were entitled to consume marijuana, and that people should have the right to consume marijuana to mitigate the pain of cancer. He said that such issues may be justified and that, if they are, they should be looked at, but that the harm that that drug can have on a young person must not be ignored.

He said that legalising the illegal trade had many economic implications and that the Bill will facilitate companies or projects that promote the development of addictive products and legitimise their practice.

### **Questions from Delegates**

**Alex Stevens** (*United Kingdom*) asked what prevented the commercialisation and advertisement of cannabis in Washington and Uruguay.

**Igor Kolman** (*Croatia*) said that he was inspired by Ms Holcomb saying that people want health and safety. He said it was obvious that prohibition and the war on drugs were completely failing on both health and safety. He said that it was quite incredible that although the world had been pursuing certain policies for 40 years, by looking at the issue simply with regard to the two words “health” and “safety”, it was obvious that they had not been successful.

**Robert del Picchia** (*France*) said that, as far as suffering users were concerned, he was not sure whether making peace with drugs would be more efficient than making war on them. He said that if drugs—not cannabis, but harder drugs—were easily accessible, that would cause a lot of concern. He said that while there might be a war on traffickers, which was good, he wondered about the effects on the health and addiction of users.

**Alison Holcomb** said, on commercialisation, that the state had delegated to the regulatory authority—the Washington state liquor control board—the duty and discretion to adopt rules specific to controls on advertising, with the policy goal of minimising the exposure of images and marketing of the product to people under 21, which was the minimum age established by I-502.

She said that there was a 1,000-foot safe zone around all areas where youths congregate, such as schools, in which stores cannot be. She said that stores must be standalone, bland and marijuana-only, which mimicked the position for liquor stores that Washington state had until 2011.

She said that the question of commercialisation was critical, especially in the United States, which has the strongest commercial free speech protections. The country was losing the battle against tobacco.

She said that she wanted to put commercialisation in a broader context. She had encountered the issue of the separation of class and the general culture of how people work hard and play hard, and how that dovetails the haves and have-nots. She said that she saw all of that as part of the problem with substance use, and that commercialisation was a piece of that bigger puzzle.

**Benoît Gomis** said that, in terms of making peace with the drugs problem, there was already a lot of evidence out there, as Alex Stevens demonstrated. However, evidence was not everything—there was also a moral judgment and a political decision to make.

He said that Damon Barrett from Harm Reduction International put the point very well in one of the workshops organised by Chatham House. Mr Barrett had said that putting in place the death penalty for drug users might have some positive impact on numbers, but he asked whether that society was one in which people would want to live. Mr Gomis wondered whether people would want to live in a society that cares for its citizens and looks after them, even if they are criminals or drug addicts, or to have tough enforcement approach, which has created a lot of harm.

He said that the focus was too often on quantitative evidence, and that people would want to be sure what change would look like. However, that was not entirely possible, so people needed to make a leap of faith and recognise that what was currently being done was already causing a lot of harm.

*Sebastian Sabini* said that, with regard to commercialisation, Uruguay had a system whereby licences were granted to producers, distribution channels and sellers. It was not a vertical system like the one in Colorado, where producers sold directly; each segment of the supply chain was separate. Users would have to register, their data would be protected and they would be able to buy up to 40 grams. Pharmacies would be involved as well.

He said that the point about surveys was an interesting. People in Uruguay were asked whether they would prefer to buy marijuana in the legal or the illegal market, and 71% said that they would prefer cannabis to be regulated. Surveys could be quite subjective, as they depended on the questions that were asked and how the data were interpreted. Politicians needed to take people's opinion into account, but sometimes they had to take decisions before that information was available. Ten years ago, for example, only 4% of people had been in favour of legalising marijuana. He said that surveys were not carried out before the drafting of every policy. That had been the case in relation to the decriminalisation of abortion, and legislators had voted on civil unions before the public had been surveyed or had contemplated the question. Sometimes it was necessary to bypass the process or to be one step ahead of it.

He said that the same criteria did not apply when it came to treating legal and illegal drugs, because there was a moral burden associated with illegal drugs. It was considered more acceptable for someone to be abusing alcohol or tobacco than for someone who was using coca paste to start using cocaine, or for a marijuana user to substitute that substance for something else.

*Jaime Mario Trobo* said that he had little to add, because those who had drafted the Bill had already given a good outline. He said that it was necessary to take public opinion as expressed in surveys into account and to be not one step ahead, but three or four steps ahead. He said that policies that were not based on consensus could have negative impacts for society.

**The Chair** said that she was sure that the speakers would be happy to answer any questions afterwards, but that she and all delegates had learned a great deal. The message had been that this was an evidence issue and a health and safety issue, as Igor Kolman said, but that ultimately it was about political will and leadership. She said that sometimes it was necessary to be brave and to stand out there, and that some great examples of that had been cited.