

# UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs reclassifies cannabis to recognize its therapeutic uses

4 December 2020 Departmental update Reading time: 1 min (374 words)

On 2nd December 2020, the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), the drug policy making body of the UN re-classified cannabis and cannabis resin under an international listing that recognizes its medical value. The CND voted on recommendations made by the WHO's 41st Expert Committee on Drug Dependence (ECDD), which suggested that cannabis and cannabis resin should be reclassified from its current listing alongside heroin, fentanyl analogues and other opioids considered to be exceptionally harmful to public health.

In 2018, WHO's ECDD carried out a formal review of cannabis and all cannabis-related substances that are currently subject to international control measures. At that time, the ECDD advised that certain cannabis-derived medicines like cannabidiol have no potential to be abused or cause dependence but have significant

health benefits for children with treatment-resistant epilepsy, and therefore should not be placed under international control. The Committee went on to scientifically review cannabis and other products derived from the cannabis plant, and made a series of recommendations that would more effectively control cannabis preparations with high levels of delta-9-THC (dronabinol), and allow further research and development of and improve access to cannabis-related medicines whilst also minimizing public health problems associated with non-medical cannabis products.

The CND has been considering the recommendations of the WHO since 2018 and agreed to an in-person vote in Vienna in December 2020. While the CND voted to accept the ECDD's primary recommendation on the reclassification of cannabis, they did not accept further recommendations made by the ECDD to change the classification of other cannabis-related substances that were aiming at ensuring their availability for medical use whilst preventing harms associated with non-medical use.

Reclassification of cannabis and cannabis resin will remove some international procedural barriers to research and development of cannabis-based medical products according to national regulatory frameworks. The change in status of cannabis will not affect its non-medical use or promote legalization, as it remains under strict international control. Cannabis and cannabis resin will now be classified as having a similar degree of abuse and dependence potential as medicines such as morphine and oxycodone.

More information on the outcomes of the CND can be found [here](#).

More information on the 41st ECDD can be found [here](#).

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