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THE PROBLEM OF CANNABIS

PROGRAMME OF STUDIES

Note by the Secretary-General

1. In paragraph 183 of the report of its eighth session,^{1/} the Commission on Narcotic Drugs decided "to approve the programme of studies outlined in document E/CN.7/256 and to request the Secretariat to carry them out in consultation with the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization wherever appropriate". The information below refers to the programme of factual studies (see paragraph 11 of E/CN.7/256).
2. The Commission also decided that a study on the physical and mental effects of the use of Indian hemp (cannabis) should be added to this programme.^{2/}
3. In view of the interest expressed by the Commission in the situation in the Union of South Africa and the large amount of data for that country which was readily available, the Secretariat began its work using the material for the Union of South Africa. In January 1954, a preliminary draft survey of the cannabis situation in the Union of South Africa was sent to the Permanent Representative to the United Nations of that country for communication to his government. In accordance with the procedure suggested in document E/CN.7/256,

^{1/} E/2423, page 16.

^{2/} Paragraph 182 of E/2423, page 16.

the Secretary-General requested that certain information not now available which was necessary to complete the survey should be furnished, and that the data which the Government had submitted in other connexions and which had been incorporated in the draft survey should be confirmed or brought up to date. In correspondence with the Secretary-General, the Government of the Union of South Africa has agreed that the first seven parts of the preliminary draft survey, (i.e. heads A through G in document E/CN.7/256, paragraph 11) should be circulated to members in their present form, together with a statement that the Union Government has not yet had time to supply additional data or to indicate necessary revisions. The Secretary-General would prefer, and the Union Government agrees, to circulate the eighth part of the study (relating to legislation) only after it has been reviewed by the Government.

4. Similar preliminary draft surveys using material already available have been prepared for Basutoland, Bechuanaland, Swaziland and Southern Rhodesia, and another for Mozambique is in preparation, in which it is intended to follow the same procedure. It is tentatively planned that these should be followed by studies of selected territories in other parts of the African continent.

5. A similar general scheme might then be followed for other regions of the world.

6. Although it is hoped that it may be possible eventually to make surveys of the situation in a greater number of countries and territories, it is proposed that priority should be given to representative countries and territories, in view of the difficulty of completing all surveys in the near future and of the desirability of obtaining as much relevant data as possible in time for the consideration of the cannabis problem in connexion with the draft single convention. The selection would be made so as to include countries and territories which represent all main regions of the world and occupy a relatively important position in relation to the cannabis problem. The Commission may wish to discuss the question of the countries and territories to which priority should be given in the preparation of the surveys (subject to the co-operation of the Governments concerned being obtained in due course).

7. It is anticipated that a number of these studies will be ready for the Commission in 1955.

8. The World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization have undertaken to co-operate in the execution of the programme of studies. As regards the additional study on the physical and mental effects of cannabis, it is understood that the World Health Organization hopes that it will be possible to prepare this study in time for the 1955 session of the Commission.

9. At the eighth session of the Commission, there was a consensus of opinion that the term "Indian hemp" should be replaced by the term "cannabis" as proposed by the representative of the World Health Organization. The annex to this note outlines shortly various considerations as regards the suggested new terminology, with particular reference to the studies discussed above.

ANNEX

1. In carrying out, in the programme of studies, the view of the Commission that the term "cannabis" should be used instead of "Indian hemp" wherever practicable, an understanding is necessary regarding the series of terms to be used to signify the various forms of the plant and of the substances derived from it. This terminology need not be defined as closely as for purposes of legislation, but should be sufficiently precise to permit existing material to be equated with current and future work.
2. The desiderata for the series may be summarized as follows:
 - (a) Pending the replacement of the 1925 Convention by the Single Convention, two of the terms of the series should be equivalents (i.e. approximate working equivalents) for the terms "Indian hemp" and "galenical preparations (extract and tincture)" used in the 1925 Convention.
 - (b) The series should, so far as possible, include identifiable terms for the forms of the plant/drug most generally found in the licit and illicit traffic.
 - (c) The series should conform as closely as is practicable for short terms to usage in scientific literature.
 - (d) The changes should be as limited as will suffice to attain the object, in order to minimize the confusion inherent in any changes of this kind in terminology.
3. "Indian hemp" is defined in the 1925 Convention as meaning "the dried flowering or fruiting tops of the pistillate plant Cannabis sativa L. from which the resin has not been extracted, under whatever name they may be designated in commerce". It is now generally recognized that the inclusion of the term "pistillate" in the definition is erroneous because the tops of the male plant also contain resin. The draft of the Single Convention therefore includes a corrected version of the 1925 definition, namely, "the [dried] flowering or fruiting tops of the plant, Cannabis sativa L. from which the resin has not been extracted, by whatever names they may be designated in commerce". The term "Indian hemp" has also been widely used, in a looser way, to cover various forms of the crude drug found in the illicit traffic.

4. The four series of terms below are based on different uses of the term "cannabis" as the common factor in the series. In series A, a direct substitution of the term "cannabis" for "Indian hemp" is made and the other terms adjusted accordingly; and similarly for the other series.

5. It is evident that having regard to existing terminology, no series will completely satisfy the desiderata. Attention may be drawn to the following points in making the comparison:

Series A. This series has the great advantages that with a straight equivalence between "cannabis" and "Indian hemp" it is most nearly in line with current practice, is likely therefore to cause the least confusion, and to be the most easily acceptable. Further, the precise use of "cannabis" corresponds fairly closely to an existing scientific use of the word, namely the pharmaceutical (see, for instance, U.S. Dispensatory, 24th edition, p. 1381 and the British Pharmaceutical Codex, 1949, p. 199). On the other hand, the series as a whole is not perfect from a logical and philological point of view, since in fact it is the resin or active principle included in the resin that is the common element in this series, not Indian hemp or "tops"; from the scientific aspect, resin is present in other parts of the plant besides the tops; and, again, leaves (dried) figure as such in the illicit traffic. This is the terminology which has been adopted in the meantime in the studies made during the past year.

Series B. The disadvantage of this series is that it uses the term "cannabis" in none of the senses in which it is commonly used at present, and therefore is less likely to be convenient in practice and to gain general acceptance.

Series C. This series has logical advantages over the preceding two. However, its use of the term "cannabis" is to some extent an innovation which differs from existing usages. Also, it may be difficult, when it becomes necessary at a later stage, to make a precise scientific definition of "cannabis" in this sense, corresponding for instance to the definitions of "coca leaf" and "cocaine" in the 1925 Convention.

Series D. This series is based on one of the present usages of the term "cannabis", namely, the generalized botanical usage, and is perhaps the least difficult from a logical and philological point of view. It has the disadvantages that in practice it is likely to result in considerable confusion in the future in reports of Governments, technical literature, etc. as to whether the plant (as intended) or the crude drug is meant, and that it does not correspond to the pharmaceutical usage.

6. It would, of course, be understood in respect of any series chosen that each term could be more closely defined where the particular context required it. It would also be understood that so long as the 1925 Convention is in force, the term "Indian hemp" would require to be used in certain contexts. Also, that the use of the numerous local words in different regions of the world, other than "Indian hemp", would not generally be affected but that equivalences would be made where the documents of the Commission required it.

Existing "Indian hemp" series: based on definitions of "Indian hemp" and "galenical preparations of Indian hemp" in the 1925 Convention	A In this series the term "cannabis" is substituted directly for the term "Indian hemp" and the other terms adjusted accordingly	B In this series the term "cannabis" is used for the resin	C In this series, the term "cannabis" is used for any part of the plant containing the active resin	D In this series the term "cannabis" is used for the plant
Indian hemp plant (<u>Cannabis sativa L</u>)	Cannabis plant (<u>Cannabis sativa L</u>)	Cannabis plant (<u>Cannabis sativa L</u>)	Cannabis plant (<u>Cannabis sativa L</u>)	<u>Cannabis</u> (<u>Cannabis sativa L</u>)
-----	-----	-----	<u>Cannabis</u> (to be used to signify any part of the plant containing the resin)	-----
Indian hemp	<u>Cannabis</u>	Cannabis tops	Cannabis tops (the terms "officinal cannabis" or "pharma- ceutical cannabis" might be used where an equivalent of the 1925 Convention definition, not corrected as in the definition in the draft Single Convention, is required)	Cannabis tops (the terms "officinal cannabis" or "pharmaceutical cannabis" might be used where an equivalent of the 1925 Convention definition, not corrected as in the definition in the draft Single Convention, is required)
-----	Leaves of the cannabis plant	cannabis leaves	cannabis leaves	cannabis leaves
Resin of Indian hemp [<u>plant</u>]	Cannabis [<u>plant</u>] resin	<u>Cannabis</u>	Cannabis resin	Cannabis resin
Galenical preparations (extract and tincture) of Indian hemp	(1) Galenical preparations (extract and tincture) of cannabis [<u>and of leaves</u> of the cannabis plant]	(1) Galenical preparations (extract and tincture) of cannabis	(1) Galenical preparations (extract and tincture) of cannabis	(1) Galenical preparations (extract and tincture) of cannabis [<u>tops and leaves</u>]

(1) There is a minor, separate point involved in this term. "Galenical preparations (extract and tincture)" is awkward, since these "galenical preparations" may be ingredients of the "preparations" of extracts and tinctures of Indian hemp placed under control by virtue of article 10 of the 1925 Convention. Perhaps the most convenient course pending the Single Convention is to speak simply of "extract and tincture of".