



UNITED NATIONS  
 ECONOMIC  
 AND  
 SOCIAL COUNCIL



GENERAL  
 E/CN.7/SR.175/Rev.1  
 4 June 1952  
 ENGLISH ONLY

COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS

Seventh Session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY FIFTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
 on Tuesday, 29 April 1952, at 10.30 a.m.

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 E/CN.7/235; E/CN.7/SR.118, E/CN.7/SR.119)

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. RABASA	Mexico
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Mr. NIKOLIC	Yugoslavia
<u>Members:</u>	Mr. SEARMAN	Canada
	Mr. HSIA	China
	Mr. MAHMOUD	Egypt
	Mr. VAILLE	France
	Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY	India

Members (continued):

Mr. ARDALAN	Iran
Mr. KEUYSSE	Netherlands
Mr. AVANOS )	Peru
Mr. MONCE )	
Mrs. MELCHIOR	Poland
Mr. OR	Turkey
Mr. ZAKUSOV	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Mr. WALKER	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Mr. ANSLINGER	United States of America

Observer: Mr. NAVAJAS-MOCRO Bolivia

Also present: Dr. WOLFF World Health Organization (WHO)  
Mr. MAY Permanent Central Opium Board  
Mr. MARAÑETO International Criminal Police Commission

Secretariats: Mr. SEMINIG Director, Division of Narcotic Drugs  
Mr. LOPEZ-REY Division of Narcotic Drugs  
Mr. BOLTON Secretary of the Commission

THE QUESTION OF SYNTHETIC NARCOTIC DRUGS (E/CN.7/L.8/Rev.1)

Dr. WOLFF (World Health Organization), referring to WHO's recommendation that analogues of certain synthetics should be placed under control until proven not to be addiction-producing, suggested that paragraph 2 of the joint French and United States revised draft resolution on the question of synthetic narcotic drugs (E/CN.7/L.8/Rev.1) should be redrafted to read:

"Endorses the recommendations of the World Health Organization, the Permanent Central Opium Board and the Supervisory Body contained respectively in the 'Official Records of the World Health Organization, No. 19 (1949)' and in documents E/OB/7 and E/DSB/9 of 1951."

Moreover, paragraph 3 (b) should be amended to read:

"Making regulations to ensure that all packages containing a synthetic narcotic drug should be clearly marked with the international non-proprietary name of the drug and with a double red line so that they may be identified by the competent services."

It would help customs officers to identify addiction-producing drugs if the international non-proprietary name of the synthetic narcotic drug appeared on all packages containing such drugs. Quoting the last sentence of paragraph 10 on page 12 of the third report of the WHO Expert Committee on drugs liable to produce addiction, he said that it was important that governments should use the non-proprietary names selected by WHO. He would refer again to that question when the Commission discussed item 12 of its agenda.

Mr. KRUYSSSE (Netherlands) said that a resolution of the kind submitted by the French and United States representatives should be as clearly worded and as simple as possible, and he could not therefore support the amendments suggested by the WHO representative. It was useless to suggest that the non-proprietary name of a drug should appear on a package as long as all States had not agreed to use one particular non-proprietary name for one particular drug. He suggested, however, that WHO might be asked to submit further proposals on non-proprietary names. It was unnecessary to remind the Economic and Social Council of WHO's recommendation, as that body had already accepted it (resolution 246(IX)).

/Mr. SHARMAN

Mr. SHARMAN (Canada) supported the joint draft resolution with the exception of paragraph 3 (e). Canada had brought synthetic narcotic drugs under the same control as ordinary narcotic drugs and was experiencing little difficulty in enforcing it. If paragraph 3 (e) were accepted, packages containing natural narcotic drugs, such as heroin, would have no special marking while those containing synthetic drugs, possibly much less dangerous, would bear double red lines: Such a distinction was not logical. The Commission's aim should be to bring synthetic narcotic drugs under the same high level of control as ordinary narcotic drugs, but not to go any further.

Mr. VAILLE (France) supported the first amendment suggested by the WHO representative, but thought that the second one was premature and should be discussed under item 12 of the agenda.

The Canadian representative's objection might be met by the deletion of the word "synthetic" in paragraph 3 (e). The double red line would then help customs and other officials to recognize any narcotic drug. He agreed with the statement that synthetic narcotic drugs should be brought under the same control as ordinary narcotic drugs. He added that the sponsors had contemplated that the red lines should be placed not on the outer wrapping, but on the inside container.

The CHAIRMAN could not support the suggested deletion of the word "synthetic," as the whole revised draft resolution referred to the question of synthetic narcotic drugs.

Mr. SHARMAN (Canada) pointed out that any imported products coming under the Food and Drugs Act and the Narcotics Act were held by the Canadian customs until the resident port inspector, who was a qualified chemist, had inspected them. It was therefore impossible for narcotic drugs not involved in the illicit traffic, whether marked with red lines or not, to enter the country undetected.

Mr. VAILLE (France) said that he had entered Canada with drugs in his luggage and they had not been examined by the customs officials.

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In order to pass through the French customs all drugs, even those in the possession of travellers, must be covered by a drug authorization issued by the Ministry of Health. Packages of synthetic drugs often reached France without the necessary export documents and were cleared unwittingly by the French customs. He was sure that a similar problem existed in other countries.

Mr. WALKER (United Kingdom), supporting the Canadian representative's remarks, thought that it would be unwise to make such an important change in the general system of narcotics control so casually. He was sure that his Government would do everything in its power to help its continental neighbours solve the problem which faced them, and would give the proposal in the joint draft resolution its most serious consideration. It was customary, however, in the United Kingdom to hold fairly wide consultations with the competent services and the trade, and until that had been done he could not commit his Government. He would therefore abstain when the matter was put to the vote.

Mr. MARABUTO (International Criminal Police Commission) supported the proposal for marking packages with a double red line.

Mr. AVALOS (Peru) supported the joint draft resolution for the reasons adduced by other speakers and also emphasized the difficulties of customs officials in identifying synthetic narcotic drugs. Although Peru had not yet ratified the 1948 Protocol, it had co-operated fully with other States in the international control of all narcotic drugs since 1944.

Mr. NIKOLIC (Yugoslavia) could not support the French representative's proposal that the word "synthetic" should be deleted. The whole draft resolution referred to synthetic narcotic drugs, and the amendment suggested would merely complicate matters. Efficient control was applied to ordinary narcotic drugs and customs officials found no difficulty in identifying them.

Mr. VAILLE (France), referring to the United Kingdom representative's remarks pointed out that the provision in question was only a recommendation and asked whether he could suggest a different solution.

/Mr. WALKER

Mr. WALKER (United Kingdom) emphasized that he was not formally opposing the resolution. He was merely saying that he could hardly actively support it since he could not know whether his Government would accept the recommendation until the necessary consultations had been held. He conceded that he had no alternative solution to offer.

Mr. ANSLINGER (United States of America) felt that it was dangerous to place a distinguishing mark on the outer wrapping of a package of drugs, as it might lead to pilferage on the docks, in transit or in warehouses. The League of Nations Advisory Committee on traffic in opium and other dangerous drugs had so decided many years previously. He suggested therefore that containers of drugs for the export trade should be labelled in a distinctive way. Customs officers were not always familiar with the various synthetic narcotic drugs and a distinguishing mark would assist them in their work.

Mr. VAILLE (France) supported the United States representative's suggestion. He pointed out, furthermore, that illicit traffickers would not receive any additional help from such markings, as the labels already indicated the formulas of drugs, which the traffickers knew.

As regards the suggested deletion of the word "synthetic," he was willing to abide by the Commission's decision and would not insist on the amendment.

Mr. SHARMAN (Canada), replying to a question from the CHAIRMAN as to whether he could accept the United States interpretation, maintained that it was illogical to recommend that all packages of possibly less dangerous synthetic narcotic drugs should bear a distinguishing mark while packages of such a dangerous drug as heroin bore no such mark.

Mr. WALKER (United Kingdom) thought that while the proposed markings might not substantially increase the risk of theft by regular traffickers, they might increase the risk of casual pilferage.

Mr. OR (Turkey), supporting the joint draft resolution, asked what progress the WHO Expert Committee on drugs liable to produce addiction, and the WHO Committee of Experts on the International Pharmacopoeia had made as regards recommendations on universal non-proprietary names for synthetic drugs.

/Dr. WOLFF

Dr. WOLFF (World Health Organization) said that the two expert committees of WHO were working in close co-operation on international non-proprietary names for drugs and a special committee had been set up to expedite that work. It was hoped that in the future the terms selected would be more widely accepted.

Mr. ANSLINGER (United States of America) noticed from the Annual Summary of Laws and Regulations relating to the control of narcotic drugs (E/NL.1950/Summary) that Iran had not yet placed methadone or pethidine under control and enquired about Iran's experience in that respect.

Mr. ARDAIAN (Iran) said that, as far as he was aware, any narcotic drug imported into Iran required a licence.

In answer to a question from the CHAIRMAN, Mr. VAILLE (France) and Mr. ANSLINGER (United States of America) accepted the amendment proposed by the WHO representative to paragraph 2 of the joint draft resolution (E/CN.7/L.8/Rev.1).

In answer to a further question, Mr. VAILLE (France) said it would be better to discuss the amendment proposed by the WHO representative to paragraph 3 (e) of the draft resolution under the item "Other business", or, if that procedure was not acceptable, to put the amendment to the vote separately.

The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the WHO amendment to paragraph 3(e) of the draft resolution.

The WHO amendment to paragraph 3 (e) was unanimously rejected.

The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the French representative's proposal to delete the word "synthetic" from paragraph 3(e).

The French representative's amendment was rejected by 6 votes to 4, with 5 abstentions.

Mr. SHARMAN (Canada) explained that he would abstain in the vote on the draft resolution because he could not accept paragraph 3(e), although he supported the remainder.

/Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY (India) said that customs officials in India had experienced no difficulty in identifying narcotic drugs without the assistance of the marking proposed in paragraph 3 (e). He would therefore abstain in the voting on the draft resolution for the reasons given by the United Kingdom representative, although he supported the draft resolution apart from paragraph 3 (e).

The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the joint draft resolution (E/CN.7/L.8/Rev.1) with the amendment proposed by the WHO representative to paragraph 2.

The joint draft resolution, as amended, was adopted by 10 votes to none, with 5 abstentions.

Mr. ZAKUSOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said he had abstained in the voting on the draft resolution because his Government did not recognize the designations established by WHO and by the pharmacopoea internationalis.

The meeting was suspended at 12 noon and was resumed at 12.30 p.m.

THE REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY ON THE COCA LEAF (E/1666-E/CN.7/AC.2/1, E/1666/Add.1/Rev.1-E/CN.7/AC.2/1/Add.1/Rev.1, E/1666/Add.3-E/CN.7/AC.2/1/Add.3, E/CN.7/235, E/CN.7/SR.118, E/CN.7/SR.119)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Navajas-Mogro (Bolivia) took a seat at the Commission table.

In addition to the documents listed under the agenda item, the CHAIRMAN drew attention to the Bulletin on Narcotics for April-June 1952, the major part of which was devoted to the coca-leaf problem.

He stated that by a decision of the Commission, Mr. Fonda, the Chairman of the former United Nations Commission of Enquiry on the Coca Leaf had been invited to attend when the Commission discussed the Report of the Commission of Enquiry, but had been unable to do so.

/Mr. BOLTON



Mr. BOLTON (Secretary of the Commission) read a letter from Mr. Fonda thanking the Commission for its invitation and expressing regret that a previous engagement prevented him from accepting it.

At the request of Mr. ANSLINGER (United States of America), Mr. STEINIG (Secretariat) read Economic and Social Council resolution 395 D (XIII). He explained that the use of the word "accomplished" in paragraph 2 of the resolution indicated that the Council considered that the Commission of Enquiry had completed the work it had been set up to do. In paragraph 4 the Council instructed the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to examine the problem of the coca leaf and to submit recommendations on the matter. It was obvious from those two paragraphs that the Council felt that the Commission of Enquiry had completed its task by submitting its report and as an ad hoc body had thus naturally ceased to exist.

Mr. ANSLINGER (United States of America) said that the Council's action had been somewhat premature. The Commission was now about to hear representatives speak on the matter. The Chairman of the Commission of Enquiry should be present to answer those statements, which might include criticisms of the Report.

Mr. VAILLE (France) associated himself with the United States representative's remarks. Although resolution 395 D (XIII) had been adopted by the Council, there had been no explicit discussion of the suppression of the Commission of Enquiry. It was regrettable that the Commission should have been suppressed without a full discussion of the question.

Mr. STEINIG (Secretariat) said it was not a question of "suppressing" the Commission. There was a difference between the suppression of a commission and the end of its mandate. The Council had merely stated that it considered the task of the Commission of Enquiry accomplished and had expressed its appreciation of the work done.

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Moreover, the Chairman of the former Commission of Enquiry had been invited to be present, but had been unable to attend the Commission's meetings.

In answer to a question from Mr. ANSLINGER (United States of America) as to which delegation had proposed the draft resolution adopted by the Council as resolution 395 D (XIII), Mr. STEINIG (Secretariat) said that the resolution had been drafted and submitted by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its fifth session (E/1889/Rev.1; E/CN.7/216/Rev.1, p.17).

Mr. ANSLINGER (United States of America) supported by Mr. VAILLE (France), did not think the Commission had interpreted its draft resolution as relieving the Commission of Enquiry of its functions.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the Commission would have to base its work on the Council's resolution.

Mr. NAVAJAS-MOGRO (Bolivia) expressed his Government's appreciation of the invitation to be represented during the discussion of the Report of the Commission of Enquiry. His Government was deeply interested in the problem -- indeed, the Commission of Enquiry had been created at the request of the Governments of Bolivia and Peru -- and it regretted that it had been unable to comply with paragraph 3 of Council Resolution 395 D (XIII). It accepted the statements and conclusions in the comments by members of the Commission of Enquiry on the statements made by the Bolivian and Peruvian representatives (E/1666/Add.1/Rev.1), in the sense that it would agree to the proposed studies of the effects of chewing the coca leaf. Those studies should be carried out over a period of at least two years, and on two groups living at high altitudes. One group would act as a control group and no change would be made in its way of life and diet. The other would be given additional food of definite nutritive and energy value and its consumption of coca would be gradually decreased. The organic changes resulting from that decrease would be studied. At the same time as those experiments were being carried on, the Bolivian Government would recommend to the producers of coca, who were of considerable importance to the country's economic life, that they should increase the production of other agricultural products, such as coffee, the revenue from

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which might replace that now obtained from coca and thus avoid serious economic dislocation.

The Commission would, of course, realize that technical and experimental equipment would be needed for such studies and that it would be impossible to carry them out without technical assistance from the United Nations. The Bolivian Government therefore asked for the help of the United Nations and the specialized agencies in the provision of the necessary material and of a team of experts who would collaborate with it in carrying out the studies.

Mr. MONGE (Peru) said that he wished to clarify certain basic principles because a clear understanding of them would avert the risk of misinterpretation of the Peruvian reply on the Report of the Commission of Enquiry. That Commission had studied the problem objectively and had assembled much significant data. He thanked the Commission of Enquiry and its Chairman, Mr. Fonda, as well as the Secretariat, for their valuable work.

There were two fundamental questions in the coca problem. The first, which had been raised by the Peruvian delegation in the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in 1947, related to the study of the chewing of the coca leaf. The second, which had been raised by the Commission, related to the possibility of limiting the cultivation of the coca leaf. The Peruvian Government still felt that production of the coca leaf should not be limited until scientific experiment had shown whether the habit of chewing the coca leaf was harmful or not.

Neither he nor his Government had stated that coca was necessary for acclimatization to the Andes. The Peruvian position was that, as there were many conflicting views as to the effect of chewing the coca leaf no hasty or ill-founded decisions should be reached. To promote the study of the problem, the Peruvian Government had established the Institute of High Andean Biology; that unique body was engaged in research on the peoples who had become acclimatized to high altitudes and on the influence of altitude on occupational diseases and others related to the chewing of the coca leaf.

The studies concerned peoples who had lived between 10,000 and 17,000 feet above sea-level for many centuries. As a point of interest, he

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mentioned that pilots from the Andes frequently flew at altitudes of 18,000-20,000 feet above sea-level without oxygen masks. As the Institute developed, it became obvious that pharmacological studies of the coca leaf must be made. He referred to an article he had written stating that "... It may be concluded that the coca-leaf chewing habit does not cause a clinically established disease, and does not present the characteristics common to drug addiction. It is, however, possible to suppose that it acts as a pharmacological agent intensifying the humoral reactions which raise the level of individual performance at great altitudes. It is this last working hypothesis which is now under study by the Institute of High Andean Biology."

The United Nations had shown interest in the problem. UNESCO had convened a conference on altitude biology at Interlaken, Switzerland, in 1948 and a symposium on high altitude biology at Lima in 1949. At those conferences certain preliminary studies on the coca leaf and cocaine had been made.

It was at that time that the Peruvian Government had asked the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to study whether or not the chewing of the coca leaf was harmful, the factors such as climate and altitude which led to the habit, its social and economic consequences and, lastly, measures to be adopted if evidence proved the habit to be harmful.

The Peruvian Government believed that man's conduct in the Andes was closely linked to his bio-geographic surroundings. The man of the Andes showed certain physiological as well as pharmacological deviations. That was why the question of high altitude biology had attracted the attention of scientists all over the world. Experts were constantly visiting the laboratory at Morococha, located at an altitude of 15,000 feet above sea-level, and the Institute had just concluded an agreement with a United States scientific organization to study the process of acclimatization of the tissues from the chemical and morphological viewpoint and the development of cancer at great altitudes.

Peru had also studied its indigenous population from the sociological viewpoint. The greater number of the indigenous population lived in the High Andes, the chief coca-consuming centres. As eminent an authority as Professor Bowlan, President of Johns Hopkins University, considered it necessary to study

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the special anatomical and sociological characteristics and the metabolism of men living at high altitudes in order fully to understand human behaviour. It was undeniable that men living at high altitudes would differ in many important ways from men who lived at sea level. Their special problems, their function in the national economy, their psychology, their migrations were all points worthy of scientific experiment and analysis.

In order to approach the problem properly, however, the anthropological relationships between men living at high altitudes and those at sea level must be established. Peruvian universities were working on the problem and had already assembled considerable data. Cornell University was carrying out further experiments in an undeveloped region of Peru at an altitude between 10,000 - 12,000 feet above sea level.

An agreement had just been concluded between Cornell University and the Peruvian Government, represented by the Peruvian Indigenous Institute, to carry out anthropological studies in the Vicos altiplano region. The coca problem was a focal point in that experiment. Professor Holmberg of the University of Cornell had recently informed him that the chewing of the coca leaf did not cause addiction for during an experiment volunteers had given up the habit for a week. That had occurred at an altitude of 10,000 feet above sea level, but science still did not know what would happen if the same experiment were repeated at very high altitudes when a person was engaged in taxing work in the mines.

The CHAIRMAN invited the Peruvian representative to continue his statement at the next meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.