



# **DAISMUN XV**

**Commission on Crime Prevention and  
Criminal Justice**

*Combating narco-trafficking and substance abuse in  
Latin America*

## **Chair Report**



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**FORUM:** Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ)

**ISSUE OF:** Preventing narco-trafficking and substance abuse in Latin America

**STUDENT OFFICER:** Haoxuan Xiao

**POSITION:** Deputy President

## **Introduction to Committee:**

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Established in 1992, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) is a United Nations sub-organization responsible for promoting international cooperation in global crime prevention and improving criminal justice systems. CCPCJ focuses on alleviating transnational organized crime, promoting the rule of law, and supporting fair criminal justice systems worldwide through a collaborative approach with local and national governments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Commission promotes the development of Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, through annual meetings, conferences and collaborative projects to target global corruption, organized crime, maintaining human rights and develop sustainable, effective solutions to global issues related to such.

## **Introduction to Topic:**

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Narco-trafficking, or the illegal sale and transport of narcotic drugs, which are proven to cause major harm to users, is a critical issue worldwide, especially in Latin America. Since the mid-20th century, the emergence of major cartels taking advantage of corrupt governments to advance record profits in their sale of illicit drugs to a rapidly expanding consumer base worldwide has become one of the top priorities of many world governments. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) would focus on this issue in this committee due to the still-extensive network of neo-cartels operating on the Dark Web and the numerous victims, many of whom are children, in the opioid crisis impacting North America and Latin America. Opioid drugs such as fentanyl have been produced by countries such as China and trafficked into many vulnerable parts of the world, and struggling farmers in Latin America itself also depends on this "cash crop" to sustain a living. The complicated nature of the issue and the record profits and connections involved for those who do engage in illicit trafficking will certainly deem this issue a difficult one for the international community to tackle.

## **History of Topic:**

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**Origin of narco-trafficking, cartels and cross-border smuggling** — Narco-trafficking's rise in Latin America after the surge in demand for illicit drugs has created various cartels, or organized



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crime syndicates that operate the market to facilitate the trade of illicit drugs for profit. Starting in the 1970s, various Latin American cartels, the most significant of which being the Medellin cartel founded and operated by Pablo Escobar in Colombia in 1976, have controlled drug trafficking, including international trafficking in an organized, monopolistic way. In the 1990s, the Colombian cartels have lessened their prominence in the drug trafficking market while Mexican cartels have been on the rise in the past 30 years.



*Figure 1. Pablo Escobar, the founder of the Medellin Cartel*

**War on Drugs** — On June 17, 1971, United States president Richard Nixon declares that “America’s public enemy #1 is drug abuse”, declaring the War on Drugs. Subsequently, the United States federal government has engaged in crackdowns on drug trafficking with varying success. The War on Drugs is now criticized widely by the American public due to perceptions of racial and political bias, lack in effectiveness and efficiency in reducing drug abuse, overly harsh punitive laws for simple drug possession or consumption, and direct, confrontational methods of tackling drug trafficking without addressing the root cause.



*Figure 2. On June 17, 1971, President Richard Nixon declares the War on Drugs*

**Opioid Crisis** — Opioid painkillers have long existed as a prescription drug, but starting in the 1990s, over-prescriptions have started to lead to addiction and overdose deaths for many individuals. Opioid drugs, such as heroin, have significant psychotic and narcotic effects that can lead to death. In the past few years, fentanyl, a synthesized opioid drug mostly produced by China and imported into Mexico and the United States, has gained in prominence as the main



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perpetrator of the opioid crisis, which proved to be a significant issue in many communities post-COVID.



Figure 3. Fentanyl, a common and low-cost painkiller opioid

**The rise of Dark Web and neocartels** — Since the rise of the Internet, anonymous corners on it have been grounds for criminal activities. Due to the difficulty of regulating and intercepting criminal activities on the Dark Web if users use private browsers such as Tor, illegal drug traffickers have started using Dark Web platforms to create “neocartels”, or drug trafficking organizations that exist completely virtually. They are very difficult to be interfered with by law enforcement and prove to be a challenge to tackle. Neo-cartels have been on the rise especially since COVID-19, which has disrupted traditional drug trafficking significantly in favor of more discreet trafficking methods using online sources. The founder of the illicit drug trading website Silk Road, Ross Ulbricht, has been pardoned by Donald Trump in January 2025.

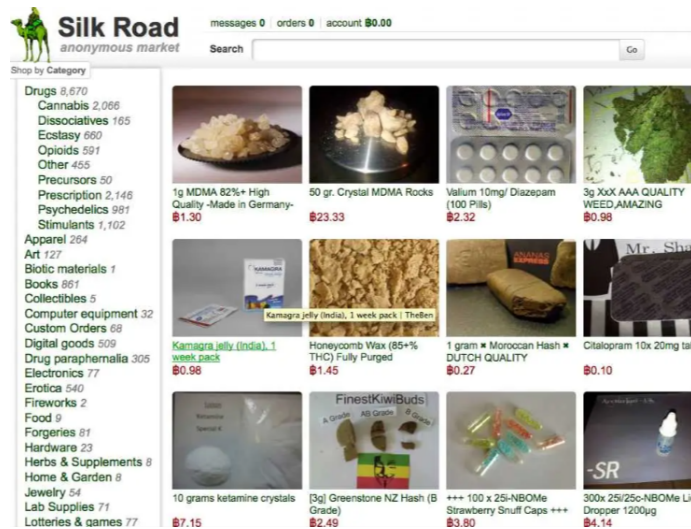


Figure 4. Silk Road, founded by Ross Ulbricht, one of the dark-web drug trade centers before its shutdown

**Recent efforts of humane drug policy and decriminalization** — Since the early 2010s, various developed countries of the West and developing countries in Latin America have started



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reflecting on confrontational and direct approaches to narco-trafficking started by the War on Drugs. By decriminalizing and heavily regulating such drugs, such as marijuana, it can prove to reduce the immense profits associated with drug trafficking in some cases. Similarly, overly punitive sentences for simple possession or consumption of illicit drugs do not reduce addiction, thus, many countries have switched to a rehabilitation-based approach to drug addiction instead of a criminalization-based approach. Effective results are yet to be seen, even in 2025, with multiple contradictory reports with mixed results on the effectiveness of changing drug policy. However, developing new policies is always an idea to be explored.



*Figure 5. Protesters protesting against punitive drug laws.*

## Key Terms:

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**Narcotic Drugs** — Drugs that cause highly addictive or psychotic effects to its users causing increased violence and/or health effects.

**Illicit Drugs** — Narcotic drugs that are banned by law.

**Cartels** — Organized crime syndicates that operate the market to facilitate the trade of illicit drugs for profit.

**Smuggling** — The illegal crossing of illicit material through international borders.

**Narcotrafficking** — The trade (smuggling, distribution) of illicit drugs in high amounts.

**Rehabilitation** — The act of restoring one's health following drug addiction through therapy and other scientifically proven methods.



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**Dark Web** — The part of the World Wide Web (Internet) accessible only through special means to maintain anonymous use

**Opioids** — Drugs derived from opium that has a main effect of pain relief.

## Major Parties Involved:

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### 1. Supranational Organizations

**United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** — The UNODC has achieved significant progress in preventing narcotrafficking since the 1988 Vienna Convention by targeting both the supply and demand side of drug trafficking and targeting cartels. Through the supply side, the UNODC has encouraged alternative crop growth (providing incentives for farmers into switching from illicit drug growing into growing alternative, legal cash crops) and eradication efforts for cocaine and methamphetamine in drug-producing areas of Latin America, and through the demand side, the UNODC has proposed rehabilitation programs in various areas with higher drug demand. The UNODC also releases a yearly world drugs report in order to reflect on the year's global situation narcotrafficking situation.

### 2. National Governments and Government Agencies

**US Drug Enforcement Administration** — The Drug Enforcement Administration is the US federal organization responsible for the various anti-trafficking and anti-cartel operations in the United States and worldwide. The DEA enforces the legislation and recommendations set up by both domestic and international governments and NGOs, and examples of its success includes the successful prevention of methamphetamine trafficking in many US States in 2020.

**Anti-Narcotics Divisions in Colombian Police** — This specialized subset of Colombian law enforcement was created in reaction to the cartels and narcotics industry in Colombia. It collaborates with NGOs to prevent outsourcing of illicit drugs and to target various supply-side harm reduction goals.

### 3. Independent Entities and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)

**Harm Reduction International** — This is the major non-governmental organization that supports decriminalization efforts around the world and drug rehabilitation-based policies to address the demand for drugs in a humane, effective way.



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**Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD)** — The CICAD is focused on targeting drug production, cartels, and trafficking, and collaborating with local and national governments and law enforcement to disrupt any illicit activity. It also focuses on collaborating with farmers to select alternative crops instead of illicit drugs as crops.

## **Problems Raised:**

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**Addiction and punishment-based drug policy for drug consumers** — In many countries, not only drug addiction a major problem following the influx of illicit drug trafficking in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but overly punitive drug policy has caused significant issues such as the overcrowding of prisons, non-effective rehabilitation and persistent addiction. It is crucial to strike a balance between a humane and effective drug policy and a hard stance towards drug trafficking.

**International drug trade from non-cooperative countries** — Many Latin American countries have imported drugs internationally through illegal means. An example is the import of fentanyl into Latin American countries, primarily Mexico, from China. While China has a very tough-on-drugs policy overall, it focuses on domestic anti-trafficking efforts. The issue of fentanyl imports from China still remains an issue to be coordinated.

**Economic struggles of Latin American farmers** — Conditions for Latin American agricultural workers is usually very difficult, and they must resort to planting and cultivating illicit drugs for a living very frequently. To decrease the supply of illicit drugs in the narco-trafficking process, those farmers must be provided alternatives to the cultivation of illicit drugs by other cash crops.

**Governmental corruption in Latin America** — Many early cartels of the 1980s in Latin American countries have infiltrated the government – including law enforcement – to turn a blind eye and sometimes even assist the illicit drug trafficking operated by such cartels through series of corrupt exchanges. Targeting corruption in vulnerable countries would also let the public be aware of corrupt networks supporting illicit drug smuggling and production.

**Neocartels of the Dark Web** — Starting from the popularization of the Internet in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Dark Web has proven to be a critical place where drug traffickers are significantly less likely to be disrupted by law enforcement. Focusing on preventing illegal drug trade on the Dark Web is an important factor in reducing the harm caused by such drug trade.



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## Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue:

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**War On Drugs** — Since the declaration of the War On Drugs from President Nixon, the United States of America has led both a domestic, regional and worldwide campaign, collaborating with law enforcement and NGOs to ameliorate the situation with narco-trafficking in Latin America. It has seen various degrees of success, as it mostly uses brute-interception and targeted disruption methods on cartels that do not address root causes of the issue, both at the supply and demand level. The Transnational Institute is a key global non-governmental organization and a policy think tank that advocates for more effective and humane approaches to drug policy.

**Recent efforts of demand and supply targeting** — Many NGOs in the region have now began to use a new method of targeting the root cause of drug demand and supply by subsidizing cash crops to de-incentivize the cultivation of illegal drugs in Latin American farmers and by supporting rehabilitation and decriminalization efforts to better address the demand for illicit drugs. Effects are to be seen as those methods have only started to be used recently. For example, the Forging Futures Foundation is a local Colombian NGO that focuses on community outreach in impoverished areas to reduce the supply of materials for the trafficking of illicit drugs.

## Timeline:

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Date	Event
About 2000 BCE	Native Americans in the Andes mountains begin to farm cocaine, the first instance of human drug cultivation.
1840	The 1 <sup>st</sup> Opium War begins to bring the illegal trafficking of drugs into public view; the British attempts and succeeds in selling opium to China
1964	The counterculture movement in the United States saw increased drug use among American youth, heavily increasing demand for drugs
October 27, 1970	The Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act passes and is signed by Nixon, beginning strict enforcement of drug regulations in the United States
June 17, 1971	President Richard Nixon declares a 'war on drugs', beginning arrests of non-violent drug offenders in the United States partially motivated by racism and political persecution
1976	The Medellin Cartel founded by Pablo Escobar in Columbia signifies the start of one of the most influential and destructive cartels in Latin America





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1980s	Drug abuse legislation becomes mainstream across the Americas while corruption and collusion with cartels become widespread in Latin America
December 20, 1988	The United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988, also known as the 1988 Vienna Convention, is a significant step of progress in drug trafficking prevention in international history.
December 2, 1993	Pablo Escobar is arrested and the Medellin Cartel ceased operations
2000s	The decline of Colombian cartels and rise of Mexican cartels signifies change in the dynamics of narco-trafficking from corruption to 'neocartels' signified by use of the Dark Web
2010s	Recent legislation to decriminalize possession and use of marijuana is enacted across Canada and many U.S. States
2013	The arrival of fentanyl in the United States has triggered a new wave of the opioid crisis that started in the 1990s with prescription opioids and began involving Mexican cartels and Chinese fentanyl producers in illegal narco-trafficking

## Possible Solutions:

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The following solutions are suggested by the chairs for inclusion in the draft resolution, however, they urge all delegates to undergo additional research through credible sources such as the UN, governmental organizations, and international news outlets to best prepare themselves for the upcoming conference.

1. The use of cooperation between non-governmental organizations, especially those without conflicts of interest with local or national figures in Latin America, to enforce and monitor national plans in the effort in combating narco-trafficking.
2. The development and inclusion of high-tech surveillance and/or illicit material detection methods to detect illicit drug trafficking and organizations that facilitate it.
3. The monitoring of possible illicit activities on the Internet, especially the Dark Web, that may correlate to narco-trafficking.
4. The proposal of legislative changes to the use of rehabilitation and scientifically proven addiction treatment methods instead of direct criminalization of personal possession of drugs in Latin America and North America to reduce demand for illicit drugs.



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