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**PRESS RELEASE**  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **As moves towards legal cannabis accelerate, drug policy experts call for responsible regulation of emerging markets**

**LONDON, 9 September 2020 – Today, the [International Drug Policy Consortium](#) (IDPC), a prominent international network of drug policy organisations, has set out a ground-breaking vision for regulated cannabis markets that advance social justice, equity and human rights. The IDPC Principles for the Responsible Legal Regulation of Cannabis is the first-ever comprehensive vision of how legal markets can redress harms caused by the ‘war on drugs’, uphold rights, promote public health, protect the environment and resist corporate capture.**

With over [190 million](#) cannabis users worldwide, the growing momentum for the legal regulation of cannabis presents a unique opportunity to move global drug policies towards social justice, human rights, and public health. From Luxembourg to Sierra Leone, over 50 countries have established or are planning to create legal cannabis markets for medical, recreational, or traditional uses. At the same time, the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs is [poised to vote](#) on the international rescheduling of cannabis in December 2020 -a watershed moment in the history of the international drug control system.

Legal regulation is potentially a powerful tool to redress the stigma and criminalisation imposed by decades of prohibition. However, with Canadian corporations controlling over 70% of the Colombian and Uruguayan cannabis markets, and Black, Indigenous and people of colour owning only [less than 20%](#) of the US market, the reality is that newly created legal markets are dominated by private actors that do not share or understand this history of oppression, and are unwilling to address it. The result is that the communities that have borne the brunt of the ‘war on drugs’ are being excluded from these legal markets. Not only does this mean they do not benefit from these critical reforms, but these developments are serving to further entrench and exacerbate inequality.

The IDPC Principles for the Legal Regulation of Cannabis make clear that the legal regulation of cannabis must include a series of comprehensive interventions to decriminalise all drug use, protect the health of people who use drugs, uphold the rights of the people working in the cannabis industry, and establish redress measures for the communities most affected by prohibition, including affirmative action to ensure participation in the market. The Principles also compel cannabis advocates to think about the implications of regulation across borders, to ensure that the rights, livelihood, and traditions of growing communities in the Global South are preserved and allowed to flourish.



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Ann Fordham, IDPC's Executive Director, said: 'As the momentum for cannabis regulation grows, we cannot leave the design and implementation of the new legal markets solely in the hands of private interests. From a social justice perspective, it is essential that those whose livelihoods are dependent on cannabis are supported to transition to emerging legal markets. From Uruguay to Massachusetts, there is evidence that legal regulation can be a genuine force for good in protecting public health and combating the stigma and discrimination suffered by people who cultivate, sell, and use cannabis. Avoiding the hard issues of social justice, equity and human rights at this moment would constitute a devastating missed opportunity.'

The IDPC Principles for the Legal Regulation of Cannabis will be launched in the first instalment of the webinar series '[A World with Drugs: Legal Regulation through Development Lenses](#)', hosted by a group of international drug policy and development NGOs on 9 September 16:30 BST, with the presence of Former Prime Minister of New Zealand and Chair of the Global Commission on Drug Policy Ms Helen Clark.

## NOTES TO THE EDITOR

### Key links and information:

- The **International Drug Policy Consortium** is a global network of 195+ NGOs that come together to promote an objective and open debate on national and international drug policies, and supports evidence-based policies that are effective at reducing harms. [More information](#).
- The **IDPC Principles for the Responsible Legal Regulation of Cannabis** will be published on Wednesday 9 September, 16:30 BST, on the [IDPC website](#).
- The **Webinar Series 'A World with Drugs: Legal Regulation Through a Development Lens'** brings together drug policy and development experts to discuss the intersection between legal regulation and sustainable development. It is hosted by Health Poverty Action, the Transnational Institute, Transform Drug Policy Foundation, the Regulation Project, the International Drug Policy Consortium, Instituto Ria, the Canadian Drug Policy Foundation, and the Interdisciplinary Centre for Cannabis Research. [More information](#).

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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