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**MUSAEV Djmaliddin Kamalovich**

*Associate Professor of the Department  
of Special Legal disciplines  
of the Customs Institute*

## CANNABIS: PROBLEMS FACING THE STATE AND SOCIETY

The issue of how to deal with cannabis and related substances, the increase in their use and supply, and the associated consequences and problems, is a matter of much debate and has figured prominently in the international drug control debate in recent years.

Cannabis has long been the most widely consumed illicit drug in the world. An estimated 209 million people used cannabis in 2020, representing 4 percent of the global population [1].

The past decade has seen an upward trend in cannabis cultivation, with the number of people using cannabis increasing by 23 percent. The prevalence of cannabis use varies greatly by region and is highest in North America, Oceania and West Africa.

Illicit cultivation, production, trafficking and use of cannabis occurs in all regions. Cannabis production, initially focused on the domestic market and concentrated in certain developing countries, is becoming increasingly global and is now located in almost all countries [2].

Although the scale of illicit cannabis production is enormous and cannot be accurately estimated as the substance is illicitly produced in all regions, at least 154 countries reported cannabis cultivation between 2010 and 2020, specifying direct activities (such as cultivation or destruction of plants or dismantling of production sites) or indirect (such as the plants seized and the origin of the cannabis seized) indicators.

When qualitative information on trends in indoor and outdoor cultivation is also taken into account, this number increases to more than 190 countries and territories. In 2020, the volumes of cannabis and cannabis resin seized increased to 4,707 tons and 2,190 tons, respectively (an increase of 15 and 29 percent, respectively, compared to 2019).

New production methods have emerged, and isolation and isolation methods have been improved. In 2019 and 2020, an increasing number of countries reported an increase in indoor cannabis cultivation, which appears to have become more common than outdoor cultivation globally [3].

In recent years, the average content of its main psychoactive component, delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (delta-9-THC), in cannabis products has been steadily increasing. In Europe, the content of delta-9-THC in cannabis increased by 40 percent from 2010 to 2019, and in cannabis resin by almost three times [4].

In the United States, the average delta-9-THC content in cannabis increased from 3.96 percent in 1995 to 16.16 percent in 2018, and in cannabis concentrates from 13.23 percent in 1995 to 60.95 percent in 2018 [5].

New types of cannabis products high in delta-9-THC have emerged: edibles, vaping products, and other products, which in some cases are marketed and packaged to appear appealing to children and adolescents. Cannabis is readily available in many parts of the world, and in some regions its consumption is becoming increasingly socially acceptable. This is due to a gradual decline in the perception of risks associated with cannabis use.

Alternatives to cannabis include synthetic cannabinoids, which typically have much higher potency than their natural counterparts. Because the short- and long-term negative effects of synthetic cannabinoid use are still poorly understood, their use may be associated with increased risk and serious harm to health [6].

The increasing availability of cannabis products on the illicit market and the increasing content of active substances in them poses an increasing danger to public health. Demand for treatment services for cannabis use disorders has increased significantly.

Between 2000 and 2018, the number of visits to drug treatment for cannabinoid dependence and withdrawal symptoms worldwide increased more than eightfold. The number of people seeking help for psychotic disorders due to cannabinoid use has more than quadrupled. In Africa, cannabis use accounts for the majority of drug treatment visits, and the rate is much higher than in any other region.

An increasing number of countries are allowing the medical use of cannabis, as well as its cultivation and the production of related substances for medicinal purposes, on their territory. In some cases, perhaps due to the novelty of such programs, they have been implemented without due regard to the provisions governing the cultivation of cannabis for medicinal purposes contained in the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 as amended by the 1972 Protocol.

INCB maintains an ongoing dialogue with governments on harmonizing standards for reporting and monitoring the cultivation, production, manufacture, trade and use of cannabis and related substances for medicinal and scientific purposes within their territories.

At the same time, misconceptions about the medicinal use of cannabis still persist in many places. Home-grown cannabis and homemade extracts for self-medication may contain herbicides and/or other toxic substances. Due to the unknown content of cannabinoids, such drugs are impossible to dose. Therefore, growing cannabis at home and making homemade extracts from it for self-medication can be dangerous.

The booming cannabis industry and other business interests are pushing for deregulation of cannabis consumption for commercial profit. This contributes to the perception that cannabis use is normal and commonplace and, as a result, reduces awareness of the harm caused by cannabis use.

Criminal organizations associated with large-scale illicit drug production and trafficking are actively taking advantage of the growing demand for cannabis.

The classification of cannabis and related substances within the international drug control system has been debated at the political level for years. Some civil society groups and some governments are calling for a review of the status of cannabis and related substances in the schedules of the international drug control conventions, or even the complete abolition of international control over them, which would effectively amount to the legalization of cannabis and allow each country to choose determine applicable controls and restrictions on access and consumption.

All these issues are perceived as serious problems by many governments and the international community. Many governments are unsure about the continued viability of control in their countries, have difficulty implementing appropriate policies, and in some cases are looking for alternative solutions, such as legalizing the use of cannabis for non-medical purposes.

This trend is becoming a growing problem for the international community, especially for States parties to the international drug control conventions, which state that, subject to the provisions of these conventions, the use of drugs should be limited to medical and scientific purposes, and any other use contrary to the provision's conventions must be considered a "punishable offence".

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