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Marijuana Vending Machines in Los Angeles are Contrary to International Drug Control Treaties, says INCB

VIENNA, 8 February (UN Information Service) -- "The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) is deeply concerned about reports that computerized vending machines to dispense cannabis (marijuana) have been put into operation in Los Angeles," said Dr. Philip O. Emafo, President of the Board. The Board concludes its 91st session today in Vienna. "We know that the use of cannabis is illegal under federal law of the United States and we trust the authorities will stop such activities, which contravene the international drug control treaties," he added.

California is one of 11 states of the United States of America which allows medical use of cannabis, though such use continues to be illegal under federal law. In June 2005, the US Supreme Court confirmed the right of the Government to enforce the prohibition on the use of cannabis in a state that removed state-level criminal penalties on the use, possession and cultivation of cannabis for medical purposes.

Cannabis is included in Schedules I and IV of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1954, as amended by the 1972 Protocol (1961 Convention). Substances in Schedule IV are those considered particularly liable to abuse.

For some years there have been various claims about the therapeutic usefulness of cannabis or cannabis extracts. Scientific research concerning this question is in progress in several countries. So far, the results of research regarding the potential therapeutic usefulness have been limited.

INCB has confirmed in its annual reports that it welcomes sound scientific research on the therapeutic usefulness of cannabis. The Board requested governments concerned to share the results of such research, when available, with the Board, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the international community.

The Board has repeatedly expressed its concern that, without having reported conclusive research results to WHO, the Governments of Canada and the Netherlands authorized the use of cannabis for medical purposes. The Board is also concerned that cannabis is used for medical purposes in some jurisdictions of the United States without having definitive proof of its efficacy.

The control measures applied in California for the cultivation, production and use of cannabis do not meet the control standards set in the 1961 Convention to prevent diversion of narcotic drugs for illicit use. Such standards require, inter alia, the control of cultivation and production of cannabis by a national cannabis agency, and detailed record keeping and reporting on the activities with cannabis, including reporting to INCB.

The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) is an independent control organ, established by the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1954, as amended by the 1972 Protocol, for monitoring the implementation of the international drug control treaties by Governments and for providing assistance to Governments in this regard.

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