OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

TRANSCRIPT

"THE IMPACT OF DRUG POLICY ON THE ENVIRONMENT"

A conversation with Kate Horner, Kendra McSweeney, Guillermo Ospina, and Nazih Richani

Moderator: Brian Winter

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ANNOUNCER:

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KASIA MALINOWSKA-SEMPRUCH:

Good evening, everyone, welcome to Open Society Foundations. My name is Kasia Malinowska-Sempruch. I work for the Global Drug Policy Program. One of the areas of our focus for the next couple of months-- our preparations to the UN general assembly session on drugs.

That is taking place in New York in April. A number of us here are-- are working towards making sure that the number of issues discussed during that meeting are broad-- broader than narrow. And obvious, drugs and the environment is one of the areas that we would like to make sure is included in those discussions.

So we're very pleased to have all of you with us today. We will start with a very short address by Alex Soros who is a board member of Open Society Foundations and also-- and also-- he is in charge of Alex Soros Foundation. And-- and then we'll hand over to-- I'll hand over to Brian Winters, who has kindly agreed to chair the panel. So again, warm welcome to all of you. And let's start with Alex Soros.

ALEX SOROS:

(On video) Thank you for joining us for this evening's discussion on a drug control policies result in harm to the natural environment. As we prepare for the UNGA's special session on the world drug problem this upcoming April, I am happy to announce the Open Society Foundations are hosting a number of events and are producing a number of reports on a range of drug policy topics. And we appreciate all of your s-- participation in these discussions. I don't wanna take up too much of your time today.

But did wanna address a few of the ways the war on drugs has devastated the environment, some of which I got to see firsthand while traveling in South America early this year, advocating for the rights of environmental and human rights defenders. Under our current policies forced drug crop eradication is simply deforestation by another name.

I spent time in places where there are hundreds of miles of virgin forests in each direction, but where the war on drugs is forcing farmers deeper and deeper into these regions, thus expanding the agricultural frontier. On top of this, many drug eradication programs incentivize mono-crops such as palm, mostly use to produce oil to replace (UNINTEL) and other drug crops, which are often native plants, naturally g-- growing and as a result, much less harmful to the environment.

Palm makes farmers reliant on a single crop for revenue. And it's had some of the worst effects on deforestation globally. Not to mention that the palm oil industry has been linked to some of the worst human rights violations. On another front, drug enforcement authorities also deploy toxic chemicals to eradicate coca through aerial fumigation campaigns, also known as spraying. These chemicals poison wildlife, harm food crops, contaminate water sources, kill animals and have had negative health impacts on local residents.

I commend the Columbian government on the recent decision to outlaw spraying. And I only hope that other countries soon follow suit. I hope those successfully put an end to the war on drugs for the sake of the environment, which we all share. Enjoy tonight's discussion. And I'm sorry I can't be there with you to partake.

BRIAN WINTER:

Okay, well, good evening. Thank you all for being here. My name is Brian Winter. And I'm the editor of *America's Quarterly*-- which is a small magazine about--

* * *TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE: VIDEO RESTARTS BRIEFLY BY ACCIDENT. * * *

BRIAN WINTER:

I mean, he's a better speaker than I am. But I don't know that the same speech twice is better than I am. No, thank you for being here. I'm the editor of *America's*

Quarterly, which is a small magazine about Latin America. Our most recent issue was on the Amazon.

So certainly touched on some of the issues that will be discussed here tonight. We have a great panel here with us. I'd like to give you-- brief introductions of them. For full bios, I think that information is available. They're all experts in their field. And I won't do justice to their expertise here. But for the sake of-- of expediency-- I'll run through these quickly. To my left-- Kate Horner is the director of Forest Campaigns at the Environmental Investigation Agency.

Nazih Richani is an associate professor and director of Latin American Studies and Political Science at Keen University. And is the author of *Systems of Violence: The Political Economy of War and Peace in Columbia*, among other works. Kendra McSweeney is a professor of Geography at Ohio State University with over 20 years of research on the relationship between indigenous peoples, forests and conservation in Central America.

And then Guillermo Opsina is a researcher and team leader on society and environment at the comparative-- I'm sorry, Comparative Social Studies Group in the University of Cauca in Columbia. So welcome to all of you. Welcome to all of you. Thank you for being here. And-- I understand what we're gonna do first is each of the speakers is gonna give a short presentation-- between five and seven minutes. I will keep a-- a-- an eye on time and-- and just-- we'll try to subtly signal you if we go over. Because I know that I have questions and-- the audience has questions-- as well. So Kate, if you'd like to start, we'll just-- well just move from right to left, if that's all right?

KENDRA MCSWEENEY:

Sure.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

KENDRA MCSWEENEY:

Thank you all. It's a pleasure to be here. I'm very grateful-- to the Open Society for giving-- me the chance to-- write this report, which-- was very n-- it-- it offered me an opportunity to get outside of Central America where my expertise has been and understand how-- what's going on in Central America is being replicated-- globally, particularly pan-tropically-- within some of the-- most bio-diverse landscapes of the world. Now-- when you think about-- tropical rain forest, you think of bio-diversity. And when you think of the threats to those environments, you think of oil palm-- timber trafficking, deforestation broadly, loss of bio-diversity, trade in animal parts-- contamination associated with illicit gold mining, a whole-- a host of environmental ills.

And what I submit to you-- today is-- tonight is that in many instances-- wherever

you see drugs being trafficked or grown in these remote environments, you see all of these environmental ills-- also. And w-- in fact, I would say that drug trafficking and drug cultivation are truly underappreciated drivers of some serious forms of-- environmental devastation.

And (THROAT CLEARING) that means that drug issues are very closely related to a host of things that we care about. As we know, climate change mitigation, securing indigenous people's rights, a host of rural development initiatives, conservation and so on. And really, the purpose of this report is to acknowledge that, yes, indeed it is drug traffickers and drug cultivators that are doing these things, that are cutting down the trees, moving the animals, converting the rains forest to cattle pasture.

But I-- we really wanna draw attention to the fact that is drug-- the-- the international drug policy regime that must bear a large portion of the blame. And the question is why. I think Alex Soros really nicely laid out why eradication of drug crops simply leads to displacement of drug crop cultivators to new areas where they do in fact pioneer the opening up of new areas and the destruction often of p-- protected areas, biosphere reserves and indigenous territories.

What is much less well recognized is the way in which environmental devastation is also-- being found in all the landscapes to which drugs are trafficked. Where they're not being grown, simply the spaces to which they're being moved. Which is what I'm seeing in Central America. We're gonna hear about other transit spaces globally.

Now, the key questions is why would the movement of drugs through a remote place-- lead to environmental devastation and what does that got to do with international drug policy. And this is really the crux of the report. And that is to lay out the-- the ways in which drug policy creates a foundation-- that first of all, enriches trafficker and creates a s-- the context for them to invest in a host of illicit activities that are environmentally devastating.

So the-- the pillars of the drug policy-- c-- of the current drug control regime are pretty much supply-- si-- or-- or predominately supply-side approaches that include prohibition of drugs. We all know about that. Eradication of drug crops. And then interdiction, which means the interception, the seizure and surveill-- surveillance and harassment of people moving drugs.

Now, interdiction policies-- lead to environmental devastation because the more traffickers get chased out of one place, the more they're just going to move into an even more remote space through which to operate. And those remote spaces happen to be indigenous territories and some of the most-- important protected areas-- in the world.

The more they have to constantly relocate, the more they're constantly struggling-- between different drug track-- tr-- between different drug trafficking organizations for control of key trafficking routes, which is a situation that leads to heightened violence and brings violence into these remote areas. And ultimately, by being chased around all the time, it allows traffickers to charge a higher risk premium, to make more money off of successfully delivering drugs to the next no-- node in the

drug commodity chain.

And so the more they're hassled, they more money they make. And when they're making a lot of money, they've gotta do something with it. And since it's dirty money, they've got to invest in something quickly. They gotta launder that money. And what they're doing is laundering that money in frontier land speculation, converting-- tropical rain forest to cattle pasture, oil palm plantations and other-- mono-agro business-- landscapes.

They're in-- they're seeing opportunity in trafficking in wildlife and timber that is in the areas-- into which they've been pushed. And so it this prohibitionary regime that keeps drug prices high. And then it's the interdiction that allows traffickers to make a lot of money, which they then opportunistically launder in the environments and the destruction of the environments into which they've been pushed.

Now, I think-- obviously, there's tremendous momentum building for drug policy reform. And I think now is really the moment to seize the window of opportunity to say, "Hey, let's rethink how we go about dealing-- with drug trafficking and drug crop eradication. How about easing up on these-- these central pillars of conventional drug reform and think about new ways-- to approach the issue?" And I'll-- I'll leave it there so that we can discuss this more in the Q and A. Thank you.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

KATE HORNER:

Good evening, everyone. It's a pleasure to be here. I'm also grateful to the Open Society foundation. The Environmental Investigation Agency is as the name suggests, an environmental organization. So I'm particularly grateful for this opportunity to begin to knit together two communities that have maybe not interacted a great deal in the past. Just by way of introduction of how we come to this issue and how we think about it-- we are an organization that's focused on insuring good governance of natural resources in a sector that is rife with illegality.

Over 70% of the wood harvesting globally is done so illegally-- and with huge impacts on local communities around the world. And those proceeds as well f-- financing corruption in producer countries. What our research has shown unequivocally is that it's international demand that is driving that illicit activity in producer countries with folks that we've investigating telling us time and time again, "No buyer, no smuggling."

That has then led to a recognition in international campaigns that consumer countries have a role to play in arresting these illicit net-- networks. And also a recognition that traditional law enforcement in supply-side interventions wasn't working in the forest space. That led to the enactment of now laws in the U.S., Europe and Australia, that for the first time, prohibited the import of illegally sourced wood products.

And I understand that maybe prohibition has a slightly different connotation in this community than it does in the forest sector. But when we say prohibition, we really mean transforming a market that was historically no questions asked, into one where there is now basic accountability for where you source from and the impact of your sourcing policies on-- sectors like the forest sector around the world.

And as we have been investigating illegal logging around the world, we time and time again come up against the drug trade. And our first interact-- our first inclination from-- predominantly the safety and security of our staff, is to put our heads down and ignore it as much as possible. And that's perhaps the first lesson to be learned, is that I think that there's-- there's a certain fear-- for those working in the field, the communities that are impacted by often very violent actors, of how to interact and how to provide information in a way that keeps them in their community safe.

As I was looking this-- this wonderful paper-- our research largely confirms-- and reinforces much of the information that was presented. Certainly true, the role of crop substitution in-- as a function of drug policy efforts is driving deforestation.

It's true not only in-- in Columbia. Certainly true in Peru where we are seeing a massive explosion of oil palm. Most of that is done so illegally. Whether or not that's linked to drug traffickers is not something that we have found evidence of now. But certainly-- as a promotion of-- an alternative crop, is certainly true. It's certainly true in Burma, where efforts to shift-- poppy production to alternative crops have driven household economies into further debt as they are forced into high-input agricultural spaces that both deplete soil quality and put communities into debt.

Which has the function then of driving them further into frontier regions like forest to access quality soil. Or it drives them back into illicit production because it's the only source of income that they have. Maybe I just wanted to talk about one new region that we've started looking in.

Which was perhaps covered in less detail in the report, which is West Africa. We started looking at West Africa because we found that it was a new supply of a very high value timber species of rosewood to China. China consumes the vast majority of the world's rosewood stocks. Predominately, as a function of their rising middle class, when they-- as a status symbol, they seek out reproduction Ming style r-- furniture that's used-- that uses rosewood.

The-- the traditional supply of rosewood has come from southeast Asia and from Madagascar. As efforts have been put in place to protect those species, we're seeing the-- the supply shift to new regions. So in 2012 and 2013, we started seeing large volumes of export of rosewood from across the West African region.

And it started in Guinea-Bissau-- in 2011, 2012. And what was particularly interesting and perhaps relevant for this community is that it-- the-- the biggest spike of rosewood happened directly following, in the two months following-- a DEA enforcement effort of a major traffickers in Guinea-Bissau.

And there were two actors that were predominantly controlling the trade. It was the-- the navel admiral and the general of the army. Obviously, the-- the man in charge

of the navy was controlling routes. The C routes-- lots of mangrove forests, lots of access-- by sea.

And on the land routes, because during Colonial times it was a typical vacation spot, lots of air strips and lots of access points on land. And those two actors were vying for control of the trade in Guinea-Bissau. In the sting effort, the general of the army did not actually get on the boat to take it out to international waters.

Where the DEA eventually arrested the-- the man in charge of the navy, Bo Bo (PH). And following the increased scrutiny of the cocaine smuggling from West Africa through to Europe, there-- the network simply shifted then to rosewood. And that's when you s-- the largest spark-- spikes of rosewood. The-- there are very strong indications that it's the same actors that are controlling the trade. Local actors say the rosewood and cocaine are cousins. They're the same actors, the same people.

We have yet to see the-- I-- I don't honestly know what's happening now with the cocaine routes. But one can presume that there's a certain-- elasticity between those illicit trades where you have-- as scrutiny of cocaine perhaps declines, you might have increased cocaine trafficking.

But essentially, provided an opportunity for illicit networks to maintain their supply routes with the new commodity. I will wrap up. 'Cause I'm probably towards the end of my time. I-- I guess wanted-- to say as-- just as a reflection from those of us from perhaps outside the sector, that the-- the resistance that I see in this community to hyper-criminalization and-- and evidence of the futility of eradication efforts bears some resemblance to the illegal logging campaigns of old that were typically focused on supply-side interventions and targeting the local actors that were particularly engaged in subsistence-- deforestation-- for local uses.

And as we've now shifted to the demand side of the equation, where it shifts the accountability matrix quite substantially-- and provides an opportunity for local actors to better assert their rights. So perhaps I will stop there. Again, I'm grateful for the opportunity to-- engage in this discussion. And hopefully it will lead to more productive bridge-building across the environmental communities and the drug policy community. Thanks.

NAZIH RICHANI:

Good evening. (THROAT CLEARING) Let me-- start with the conclusions since we don't have much time. So breaking conventional wisdom, I will start by presenting three over-arching conclusions reached by our preliminary research. And-- and then list three core model points-- followed by some observations drawn from the Columbian case, which-- which is my-- the focus of my own research.

The first-- over-arching conclusion is narco-traffickers or narco-trafficking is great for Capitalism-- since it's generating both capital and accumulation. But it's harmful to sustainable development, the environment and public health. Second over-arching conclusion, narco-traffickers (UNINTEL PHRASE) excellence (UNINTEL PHRASE)

free marketers with the capacity of enforcing contracts and protecting their gains s-- since they cannot solidly depend on the state protection.

In some cases, they do depend on state protection as well, through corruption in all the cases, actually, with (?) narco-traffic and operators. The third over-arching conclusion is narco-trafficking proceeds-- did not create but reinforced trends, such as transforming land usage and food productive-- from-- productive ends to speculation, cattle ranching, agri-business, mining and services.

There are three-- interdependent dimensions that reinforce-- actually, three-- or nodal (?) points, if you wish, of the political economy of narco-trafficking pertinent to our research agenda. The first one is the production side and the environmental damage is that caused by the triangle of cocoa plantations, cocaine production and the strategies for mitigation and-- and eradication of the-- drug enforcing regimes, or the drug fighting regimes.

Such as the ones deployed in Columbia, Peru and Bolivia and others. And secondly, which is maybe the most complex aspect of the whole narco-trafficking problematic is the cascading effects of narco-trafficking on socio-economic political impact ecological transformation-- caused by the repatriation of the narco dollars. Or the-- narco dollars generated from cocaine selling in global markets. This is, I think, the most complex aspect of the-- of the problem.

And then finally, the collateral environmental damage in transit points. Now-- going-- there are two components of the problematic. The direct and the-- what I call the cascading. Let me just-- just to sketch the direct impact of narco-trafficking. A simple arithmetic exercise can give us some idea of the relationship between direct and cascading effects. In Columbia, for instance, the areas impacted-- the most by cocoa plantation and-- it's movement were calculated in 2009 to be 68,000 hectares.

Which is about 0.1% of the country's area. From my first look, this is not significant, right, 0.1. It's not very important. But the second look (THROAT CLEARING) at which we studied its shifts and changes in areas of cultivation, a more sobering figure emerged that is more than 400,000 hectares were affected by cocoa plantations at one given point between 2001 and 2006.

And as some experts claim, if you add to these 4,000-- 400,009 hec-- thousand hectares, one kilometer, basically UNDAR (PH), what they did at exercise, for every hectare, they add one addi-- one kilometer around hectare-- that is affected by the cocoa plantations. So therefore according to the UNDAR calculations, that brings us to a staggering figure of 12.4 million hectares in Columbia were impacted-- by the cocoa plantations over-- until 2008.

Now, this latter figure represents ten percent of the national territory of Columbia. So now we are talking about the-- the-- this is the direct. Now, (THROAT CLEARING) since we're talking about cascading-- the narco bourgeoisie-- who-- who transferred to Columbia roughly circa $47 billion between the years of 1981 and 2008-- or 2009, pardon. From which 16 billions were repatriated between 2000 and 2009. Ironically, that was during the peak of the so-called plant Columbia, which amounted

to less than ten billion. (CHUCKLE)

So narco-traffickers-- (CHUCKLE) were contributing more than the U.S. funded Plant Columbia to Columbia. I don't know if contributing but let me use this term problematically. The narco bourgeoisie funds were invested in various sectors, chiefly in acquiring lands and real estate, stimulating macro-economic trends, including speculative-- speculative and land bubble.

Which basically I'm looking at-- my research is looking actually at-- how land prices have been increasing in Columbia for the last-- ten or 15 years-- which is again disrupting the rural economy and impacting food production and these-- and full security in the country. (THROAT CLEARING) Now, it's not only in automation for the employment and distorting the allocation of resources and the, of course, the levels of the conflict.

Now, the total figures, let-- just to give you an idea between cascading and direct, now we need to add-- to this figures, the other cascading effects, which is cattle ranching, illegal mining-- expansion of agri-business and illegal (UNINTEL) trade-- what I mentioned before in the-- the presentations. A great part were either stimulated or spearheaded by the narco bourgeoisie. The surface area impacted could reach as high as 20 million hectares, a figure-- that is-- I mean, it's a work in progress that will req-- that will require fur-- further validation.

I'm looking at how we could really-- well, according to my initial research, I think we are-- this figure is the most plausible about the damage, direct and cascading, in terms of the environment. (THROAT CLEARING) I think-- I think I will stop here. And-- maybe with the Q and A we can further develop these things. Thank you.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

BRIAN WINTER:

Guillermo? (THROAT CLEARING)

GUILLERMO OPSINA:

Yes, thank you. Okay-- thanks all for coming. I will try to talk in English. And the-- the first thing that I must say is-- thanks a lot, Kasia and all the team in the Open Society Foundations for invite me. And permit that I have this amazing week learning here about something really that-- one thing that I don't know.

I-- I have an idea what-- what this works in this side of the large change of the trucks (?). And this how bad-- hand reduction. This is an amazing week learning about that. Because I know a little bit about-- from the-- today, another side of-- of the change in-- in which-- the drugs is produced. Mainly, the-- the raw material to the drugs production. And this is the-- another-- this is another one. This is another side when the people use-- some people use drugs.

And this is two very different realities. And I know-- I-- I know some aspects of-- of the-- the-- the-- the-- the-- places in which-- there are-- production of raw materials to-- to the elaboration (?) of drugs. And the main idea that I want-- leave here is that after-- after that part in the drugs production-- behind that, there are families, humans. There are people working the land.

And-- they have-- the cocoa crop or-- or poppy crops as part of their familiar production. This part is-- is-- is one-- cultivation (UNINTEL) that support the families incomes-- in the-- in the fields when the people grow those plants. Because we are talking about a plant. It's not-- when-- when pe-- sometime people talk about-- cocaine fields or crops. I don't understand what means. Because if I answer in-- for example, in the botanical garden about coca plant, the manager can ask me, "Are you asking about cocaine?"

"No, no, I'm not asking about cocaine. I'm asking about cocoa plant." Because it's a plant, like poppy. Poppy's another plant. But cocaine and-- morphine or heroin is another matter. But in the fields where people grow that lands is-- there are another realities. It mainly is related with poor people looking for an opportunity to-- to get an income in their domestic economy.

And here, for example, in the-- in the war or-- or the reality of users-- (THROAT CLEARING) I-- it caught my attention that usually people don't know from where or from what kind of context is coming from, that subs-- substance that-- that are using. For example, about poppies-- people thought-- some people that I talk in the-- for example, in Washington, Eight Corners Project is very interesting case. People-- I try to talk with people about, "Okay, what-- what do you think about that substance that you need to use or whatever."

And people say, "Oh, yeah, the-- the-- the heroin come from the leaves of a plant." So I say, "Okay, but it's not from leaves. It is another-- it's-- it's a flower. And this flower have-- some like (UNINTEL). And from their part of the plant, come from the (UNINTEL)." But they said, "Really? That-- I don't know, that-- that-- it's amazing. I-- I thought that it was from a plan-- from a leaf."

It's in the case of coca-- coca-- cocaine come from a large process from the leaf, as material-- raw material. But it's-- I think that there are two different real-- realities, very different realities. So-- so distance realities. But it's important to work in the-- in-- in-- in connect. Because there are similar aspects, (NOISE) even (UNINTEL) the differences of context for-- of course-- because the urban and industrial context like Manhattan is so different of the growers in the-- in the countryside of Columbia or Peru or Afghanistan or (UNINTEL), et cetera.

So there are different realities there. The important matter is to be clear that-- there are people-- it's people. It's human beings behind this-- this matter of discussion today with drugs. So my main interest as anthropologist and-- and Ph.D. student, have been-- have been-- about the-- people living in national parks.

National parks is-- maybe it's not the same here in U.S.A. But it's-- it's some kind of protect areas, it's one category of protect area like national forest or-- or another.

And in this areas-- the idea of protect areas is that people have another space there. So it's-- it's-- it's one kind of-- of space is to nature protection. And-- but the realities show that in many national parks and other prote-- and-- and other protect areas, there are people living there.

So it's-- it's-- it's the-- it's real that there are people living in protect areas. And-- the-- the direct effect of that situation is that, that people-- some kind of people, because not all-- not all people-- some kind of people is defined l-- as-- as an object of interventions. It's people that no s-- not must to be there. It's pretty considered an object of replacement or the-- of the (UNINTEL).

In the case of indigenous people, it's consider as part of the conservation areas. Moreover, indigenous people is consider an-- a conservation object as-- as-- at the same level of nature (UNINTEL) objects-- nature objects. But in the case of people that is not indigenous, White-- White-- White people is not indigenous. For example, peasant, I don't know, they-- they-- they-- the words in French or in English. I don't know, but it's peasant-- peasant-- peasantry people?

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

KENDRA MCSWEENEY:

In the case of peasantry people, the-- the relationship with protect-- protect areas and national park in particular is so different because these people is consider-- is consider as illicit in national parks, is people that not-- that not have any space there.

Because it's a space for-- conservation nature. Conservation nature, yeah. So-- my main interest in this aspect of people living or dwelling in (UNINTEL) in national parks is how-- what-- what is the relationship between they and-- and the land use, for example.

Land use is considered illegal. And land property considered illegal also. And-- this is-- these people lives in a situation of marginalization because it's consider-- that's illegal. Sometimes-- it happened that in national parks, live people that was there-- there in that place before, declaratory or the statement of the national park.

And that produced a incompatibility to resolve (?) bad-- it's so-- it's so-- it's not easy resolve that-- solve that. So the problem increase or-- or the situation is increasing in the critic mass when-- when we find in national parks, moreover-- moreover people that-- as peasantries-- (UNINTEL) or cultivating coca or poppies.

So it's-- it's illegal people because live during a place where supposed-- is not-- it's-- it's not people. Is just nature. But moreover, these people is growing coca or poppies like a part of their livelihood system. Because this (UNINTEL) or cultivations make part of the-- domestic or familiar economy like an-- an-- an income in cash that not-- is not comparable with another (UNINTEL) life. For example, plantain or banana or juka (PH) or whatever other-- other plant.

So-- this is one part, the-- the land uses-- a study-- studying land uses in national

parks, we find the relationship between this and the land tenure systems. And this is more interesting even because-- land use and land tenure systems are directly related. But not always is-- explicitly-- or clear in the-- (UNINTEL) surveys or in-- in that kind of-- files to-- to understand how the state think the situation of people living in national parks and protect areas.

And moreover, related with land uses like-- illicit crops and production of raw materials to the drugs production. This is my-- the-- the main-- the main be-- so the-- the why-- context of-- of my work in Columbia. But-- it's related with the-- and other's presentation is-- is-- the question indeed is what happen-- after land is abandoned for the pressures of drugs policies. Because people is-- I agree, p-- people is moving and displaced and pushed more and more (UNINTEL) for the drugs policies.

Looking for new lands because-- because there are people-- poison-- for aerial spread of-- (UNINTEL) or Roundup or that things. So what happened with the land that people leave when move into new lands? This is one of the-- of the main questions and--

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

KENDRA MCSWEENEY:

The time end?

BRIAN WINTER:

Well, no-- but-- but we-- let's-- let's come back to that. Because you-- you've-- as many of our panelists have, you've-- in the process of answering many questions, you've raised many questions as well. So what I'd like to do now-- is move to-- sort of a moderated discussion. And-- and-- everybody on the panel should-- should feel free to jump in as they want. We'll do that for about-- 20, 30 minutes or so. And then there are many of you here-- and we'd like to open up after that, the floor to your questions as well.

And my first question is-- is targeted towards-- towards-- Kendra and-- and Nazih, specifically. Beyond the ways that we've talked about already tonight, what-- what are the some of the less obvious ways in which-- the current international drug policy results in environmental destruction? I mean, we've talked a little bit about palm oil. But w-- what else-- what else is there that-- that's sort of less visible to those of us-- you know, living in cities, whether it's in-- cities in Latin America or-- in places like New York?

KENDRA MCSWEENEY:

Thanks for that. I think probably-- I mean, in general this issue is kind of overlooked. I think people get the idea that where drugs are cultivated and then eradicated, that creates a situation where farmers simply move-- move deeper into the forest. I think that's something we sort of understand.

I don't-- I think the dynamic that is least well-understood, as I mentioned, is the way in which drug trafficking zones become sites of real-- environmental devastation. And so I think it's great that Kate brought up West Africa. Because drug trafficking zones, under the current drug policy regime are proliferating.

So the DEA, together with the Mexican government push-- well, let's go back. Plan Columbia is successful in de-cartelizing-- Columbia and breaking apart the big cartels. So operations-- move to Mexico. Then in 2006, the Mexican Government-- decides to crack down on drug cartels there. So they start to-- they stop receiving drugs in-- (THROAT CLEARING) into Mexico. And they start moving operations further south into, first, Guatemala, then Honduras. Now they're-- being chased out of Honduras by-- y-- by the Honduran military backed by the DEA and SOUTHCOM and others.

And moving into Nicaragua-- c-- Costa Rica and so on. And things are getting a little too hot in Cos-- in-- for moving drugs through the Caribbean and Central America. Well, let's start moving drugs through West Africa. This is the cocaine trade, obviously and so on. And so the emergency of West Africa as a cocaine trafficking hub is a direct result of prior crackdowns in other areas.

And so the-- the-- what I call in the report, this relentless cat and mouse game is going nowhere. It's simply smearing the problem around the globe. And I think that's something. And-- and trafficking zones are these spaces where-- when traffickers are pushed into these areas, they-- they wreak havoc. And in urban areas, we know that it's the gangs that typically embody the-- the-- the chaos that reigns.

But it's-- the problem is very much a rural problem, too. Because as traffickers operate through these remote areas, they don't miss any opportunities, being the good Capitalists that they are, they miss absolutely no opportunities to benefit from speculative land markets and so on.

And as Nancy so nicely said, because they have cash and because they have-- violent s-- at their disposal, they operate-- sometimes with complete impunity. So it's very easy to open a speculative land market in the middle of a bio-sphere reserve if you can pay off every inspector and you can create a landscape of such violence that nobody-- will-- will rat you out. And so that's what we're seeing, is sort of drug traffickers acting as-- perhaps the pioneers in opening up what were formally protected spaces to international capital investments in things like cattle-- and in oil palm.

Which are good ways to launder money. They're also good long-term investments, whether you're-- whether you're a-- yeah. They're good long-term investments for

anyone, in-- including drug traffickers. So-- but the drug traffickers are creating this wonderful investment climate in-- some of the last and best-- rural frontiers. And this is happening across the globe. Does that-- does that answer your question?

BRIAN WINTER:

It does. Thank you. And N-- Nazih, do you have anything to add to that?

NAZIH RICHANI:

Yeah. (THROAT CLEARING) Actually-- maybe we should-- open-- a very serious-- debate about the drug fighting regime itself. Because in fact-- the reason why narco-trafficking is a very-- good business is simply because of the prohibition, see? So in other words-- if we continue under that ceiling-- this is an endless war that will-- stay with us for another 300 years, okay?

So the logic of-- the-- the-- the-- because what we need to do is first and foremost legalize drugs in order to-- to-- eliminate incentives of that business. As long as the drug regime-- fighting regime exist-- under this regime-- actually it's a futile effort to think about all the cascading events.

If we are-- if I were to accept that-- there is little we can do about changing or legalizing drugs, then second-- recommendation could be, I mean, at least the lax financial system here in the west, in industrial nations is where basically most of the drug money is being channeled back to the-- to different-- West Africa or to Columbia and Central America and Mexico. So therefore, the financial-- the laxity in the financial system here, including in the United States, is part-- partially responsible for the whole drug problem.

So-- either way, either you reform or-- if you want to continue this policing strategy, although-- I-- I (CHUCKLE) know that it's futile and it will lead nowhere. But if you want to really fight them, fight the drug thing, at least develop-- a more efficient financial-- oversight in order to control the money laundering operations that happens basically here.

Most of the money-- most of the proceeds of the money remain here in the-- in the West. And-- just a fraction goes back to Central America, to Columbia, Peru, Bolivia, all-- elsewhere. So if we-- if we need to be candid, we need to be honest about the problematic. But I think the-- the real solution is by changing the whole drug fighting regime by legalizing drugs. Thank you.

BRIAN WINTER:

Thank you. Well, you know, that-- that leads into my next question, which is really for the whole panel. Which is-- you know, is there some sort of-- I mean, beyond the

merits of the drug legalization debate, which I think is something that we could have-- a whole separate debate, or series of debates about.

Is there any middle ground short of that? I mean, are there policies within a framework where, you know, there was still drug interdiction. Are there policies that could potentially make a difference on the environmental side of this? Or is legalization just the necessary precondition here?

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

BRIAN WINTER:

Good luck.

KATE HORNER:

I'm-- again, I will say again, I'm not a drug policy expert. And we come to this from looking at monitoring environmental crime. I-- I guess-- what-- what I would say is certainly the-- the crop substitution policies that-- that privilege and-- have a strong preference to-- input intensive agriculture that is imposed on communities, profoundly undermines both (THROAT CLEARING) rural economies and sovereignty and rights.

When-- and-- and-- and puts those communities into long-term debt that they have nowhere else to turn but illicit economies. So I think that there are extraordinary lessons to be learned from the-- agricultural campaigns that are trying to support agro-ecological approaches that allow communities to define-- their agricultural systems.

In a way that-- lifts up and upholds-- indigenous peoples and local communities' knowledge and supports their food sovereignty objectives. I think that that's one. I-- I-- from a relatively-- neophyte perspective, I think that the focus on eradication that (THROAT CLEARING) sees communities as-- primarily a locus of illegality seems very familiar to the illegal logging world, where there has been a blindness to the role of transnational corporations in deforesting.

And largely out of-- convenience, there was-- an-- an attempt to target and criminalize local actors for entering into the forest largely for subsistence means. And that means that they are then blind to the-- the larger forces at work that-- that are primarily responsible for motivating the impacts on the forest.

And-- and-- certainly undermines-- I mean, the-- the-- the-- the difference-- I think it's-- (THROAT CLEARING) is that-- is that Bolivia that, I think, that's allowed for some degree of coca cultivation in-- in-- in deference to the traditional uses of cocoa. And I think that that is also an important lesson. It's an inconvenient one. But one that allows for-- communities to define their own approaches to production of whatever it is, I think is-- is one that seems-- reasonable to me.

I would-- one last thing that I would just say-- of approaches that seemed to work is-- we-- from-- from looking at other illicit networks, I-- I certainly see the value in targeting financial flows. What you will see in the United States is that the Department of Justice is particularly eager to use legal avenues like the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and the Anti-Money Laundering (THROAT CLEARING) statutes.

Particularly for pol-- politically exposed persons in the wake of 9/11. And leaving aside the-- the Department of Justice political motivation, that means that we will fall upon friendly ears with some of this information. I would be interested to know more about how actors in the drug policy community are monitoring financial flows. It's certainly one that we find very difficult. But efforts to increase-- corporate transparency is something that I think would be-- an important middle ground.

Because it would allow you to-- to more effectively track the money. Because what we see is that you clamp down on one illegal actor, they simply set up a shell corporation that benefits the same companies. It just has a different name. It's just really hard to track that. Because we don't have any transparency in corporate records.

KENDRA MCSWEENEY:

I-- I think those are great points. I mean, I-- I really don't think there's a magic bullet here. We're talking about digging ourselves out of a morass that we've-- dug ourselves into over 40, 50 years of conventional drug policy. And I-- I-- I think it'll take a host of different creative solutions to dig ourselves out of it. But I think beginning that journey has to-- has to-- begin with recognition that-- we have effectively, in the global north, outsourced dealing with the drug problem, to countries of the global north.

By locating the pathologies of the war on drug as-- pathologies inherent to these nations. So Columbia is-- is somehow pathological. Central America does it-- you know, has poor governance. You know, the-- these are created-- the problems in these countries and-- West Africa, you know, rogue nations, failed states.

These are states that have-- are bearing the burden for our outdated-- very 20-- 20th Century-- drug policies. And so to go after them is fundamentally to blame-- blame the victim. And I think-- spaces have to be opened up within the multi-lateral drug-- policy community to seed space to these countries-- countries of the global south who have been most affected by these policies, to suggest new ways-- to begin to reorient drug policy in a way so-- so that-- the users of drugs bear-- the majority of the burden for dealing with the drug issue.

I think when I talk to people in Central America, what they say is, "How about taking the money that you're spending chasing-- chasing fast boats around the Caribbean and put it into rural governance? How about putting it into-- reinforcing the protected areas? How about putting it into land titling for indigenous people? How

about putting it into a host of issues that-- get totally neglected in this-- in-- in-- in our stubborn pursuit of-- of traffickers?"

And so I think there are all kinds of opportunities for inventive new drug policies. Bolivia, Uruguay are doing really interesting things. They're finding their own way to do it and it's working for them. I think these baby steps are-- are what we should be looking at and-- learning from.

BRIAN WINTER:

You know, I-- I-- I lived in Latin America for ten years in-- in different countries. And-- in the producer countries-- as well as the consumer countries. And I spent these last five years living in Brazil, which is, of course, now the world's-- by some-- measures, the world's biggest consumer of cocaine.

You really get the feeling that you're just going up against a tidal wave of drug money. That these governments really struggle and maybe just don't have the resources to compete against. The kinds of measure that-- that you're talking about, I mean, even things like sponsoring-- land titles, for example, which seems to me like sensible policy. I mean, do those just get swallowed up again at the end of the day by this seemingly infinite reservoir of cocaine-related money? That-- that's for you, Kendra.

KENDRA MCSWEENEY:

Oh. (CHUCKLE) Yes. I mean, there's a tremendous amount of (THROAT CLEARING) policy displacement to chasing traffickers and cracking down on urban drug gangs. And so that money has to come from somewhere. And it usually comes out of, you know, community development, rural development programs.

But-- sometimes that-- that-- redirection (THROAT CLEARING) of-- national monies is not a domestic-- is not driven d-- by domestic decisions. It's being driven by-- international players who put tremendous pressure on countries to do that. I mean, if you-- if-- if we allow a little thought experiment here.

Let's say tomorrow the DEA, SOUTHCOM and all these other-- all the other sort of-- enablers of drug interdiction-- just-- just stop for a little while. And the trafficking-- routes solidify an-- the risk premiums go down so the traffickers make less money and they fix the routes and don't wander around into new areas. I think you would see a marked reduction in the sort of environmental harms that we're seeing.

And I think you'd buy some breathing room for-- the sort of alternative strategies like-- improved forest governance-- pursuit of indigenous rights-- red plus programs to pr-- protect carbon stocks and so on. I think you give those-- programs a space to operate, a little room, a little breathing room. So that-- that's my answer.

NAZIH RICHANI:

Better quality.

KENDRA MCSWEENEY:

And you'd get better qu-- I mean, why not fair trade cocaine? I mean, seriously. (CHUCKLE)

BRIAN WINTER:

This question's for Guillermo. You know, you've studied the effects of-- conflict on-- on the environment and natural resources and specifically in-- in Columbia. Are you hopeful at all that the current peace process under way could help mitigate some of those effects?

GUILLERMO OPSINA:

I have translations (UNINTEL) here. And I wanna use it. (CHUCKLE)

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

BRIAN WINTER:

The-- the-- the question is-- (FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED).

TRANSLATOR:

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED).

BRIAN WINTER:

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED).

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

BRIAN WINTER:

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED). I doubt it. I doubt it.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

BRIAN WINTER:

No, I'll-- I'll ask it again in English and-- and you can translate. The question is-- you know, you have studied the relationship between conflict and environmental damage. Are you hopeful about the consequences of the current peace process in Columbia and the way that that can mitigate some of these environmental costs?

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

GUILLERMO OPSINA:

I just wanna be sure about the question.

BRIAN WINTER:

Of course.

GUILLERMO OPSINA:

Because it's very important.

BRIAN WINTER:

Of course.

GUILLERMO OPSINA:

It's very important. It's-- the first is that, that process, that peace process in Lavana (PH) is a national proud-- I don't know, proud you say what?

BRIAN WINTER:

A-- a source of pride?

GUILLERMO OPSINA:

Pride.

BRIAN WINTER:

Yeah, (FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED). Right?

GUILLERMO OPSINA:

Yes. No, no, no, it's not-- (FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED). The hope-- of-- for the nation, you know? Because, for example, I don't know-- my country in peace. I-- I always have lived in a country with-- an internal conflict for more than 15 years.

I have (UNINTEL). And I don't know a country w-- in peace. And it's-- it's a dream. If-- if this country get the peace because-- because it's amazing. It's an amazing country. But-- I don't know, there-- is-- there are a like or lack-- lack, yeah, of trust in the population.

Because-- because-- it's a long time. You know, it's-- it's almost like an habit. It's their routinary (PH) violence. It's not just about-- about the FARC or the big arm groups like-- egregious FARC or ELA or-- and others, smaller. It's-- it's beyond that. It's about the criminal organizations-- even thug-- the government-- the corruption in the state is amazing.

It's-- it's incredible. So the-- the-- the peace-- process agreement to have-- two aspects or two points related-- directly related with-- with the-- the subject or the issue on the table-- the first one is the land reform. Land reform in Columbia is a promise. But it's a promise that-- that no one-- no one in government had complete.

TRANSLATOR:

Achieved.

GUILLERMO OPSINA:

Had achieved. And because-- land in the-- in the deep of the-- of the Columbian conflict, land is the-- the-- the-- the gasoline. It's-- it's-- the-- the matter. After all, beyond-- drugs is another-- drugs support part. But-- but after all, it's the land. Land is-- is the main-- the main concern in-- in the-- in the internal conflict. So the first point is land reform. But-- but the question is how. Redistribution of land, because-- so few people-- have a lot of-- extension of lands.

And the most (?) population is-- is without land or have-- just little pieces of land. And in the most of cases, that-- that-- proper-- that-- tenure is-- is just an occupation. You see, and-- and-- and irregularity or-- or-- I don't know which is the word but--

BRIAN WINTER:

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED).

GUILLERMO OPSINA:

Si.

BRIAN WINTER:

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED).

GUILLERMO OPSINA:

Okay. Okay. (FOREIGN LANGUAGE NOT TRANSCRIBED) the third point of the agenda, of the agreement is related with-- drugs production. Because FARC is consider one of the biggest cartels-- of traffickers in the world. But it's the revolutionary group. But it's-- it's a Capitalist group in this moment.

It's-- it's like-- a multi-national-- getting incomes-- you see what-- what they want. Extortion on people or sequest-- kidnapping or trafficking with cocaine or something like that. Or just-- trafficking with people. Because will displace people or kill people is-- is one of kind of use people like-- like an object in the-- in that perverse system of production.

But of course, the-- the agreement we have and-- and environmental effects. But I think that the-- the effect-- the effect would be-- I'm not an exp-- an expert in-- in biointologist (PH) or conflictology (PH) or something like that. But-- but yes, the effect is when the people to get or to have the-- the possibility to return to their-- their lands because they're-- a lot of people was displaced from their lands for (UNINTEL). If people have the opportunity to return or go back, of course. We'll-- we'll be-- will use again lands abandoned for 20 or-- or 30 years.

So that impact will be clear. Maybe in-- in this moment-- some people talks about the-- the-- the forest in-- in Columbia, for example, again a space in the last 20 years. They recover. They-- they-- they-- the forest recover in the country.

But if people get or to have the opportunity to work in the countryside, in the lands, it's-- it's almost sure that they-- they full-- they ch-- they call-- the land cover (?) change again into agricultural lands. This is possible. And-- illicit crops-- consider illicit crops, it's possible that grows also. Yeah.

BRIAN WINTER:

Nazih, do you have anything to add to that? I mean, does-- does a peace deal make any material difference in drug production in Columbia? Because I-- I have to confess my own doubts on that one. I mean, I-- I-- I understand the-- the historical aspect of it. But it seems based on some of the arguments that we've been hearing tonight that-- really it-- it-- that production just shifts elsewhere and the-- the core

problem remains the same?

NAZIH RICHANI:

Thank you. Thank you. Actually, the-- (THROAT CLEARING) Columbia, again, is-- producing or planting more cocoa this year than the previous years. So therefore cocoa production has increased. Peru assumed the first position. And then Columbia retake-- retook it again, 2014.

If we take the last year on-- actually this year, 2014, according to the latest statistics from the department-- national development-- planning department-- the figures is that this year alone, the deforestation in Columbia increased by 16%, 16, 1, 6, percent, 2014. And this is while-- there is a cease-fire between the FARC and the-- the government. And the LANA is about to commence it's-- peace talks with the-- with the Columbian Government.

From my own field research, in department of Meta this summer, I noticed that-- whatever space is left by the FARC is being occupied by para-military groups. So therefore I don't think given this current situation, I do not under-emphasize. I do not expect that-- the deforestation nor the cocoa production will decline with the signature of the peace agreement next year.

BRIAN WINTER:

It sound like it-- you're saying it may continue to increase?

KENDRA MCSWEENEY:

Correct. Or at least-- I would not expect it to decrease any time soon. What with-- what is needed in Columbia-- and not only Columbia, maybe in the (CHUCKLE) remaining-- in the India (?) region maybe also in Central America, is rethinking the economic models of development at least-- reactivate the (UNINTEL) excites, great new incentives for the presidents to shift from-- legal to-- to legal.

But at the same time-- if we don't see any changes here in terms of the-- drug fighting regime, this is not-- (UNINTEL) thing, really. We have to take it very seriously to change-- I mean, this regime, as long as it's in place, drug trafficking will continue and we keep fighting, the mouse and cat type of thing.

So it's-- a futile war, endless and the drug traffickers are smart people. They have the incentives to do it. They make lost of mon-- billions of dollars. So you-- have to eliminate the incentives for the-- the whole-- drug-- economy. Now, in case of Columbia, as I said the-- the-- the solution, of course, it-- it depends on the-- how serious is the government to implement first-- and foremost, the land reform. Secondly, and now the government is pushing for something called-- Zider, which is

basically opening-- new frontiers.

And this is a very dangerous thing. New frontiers in areas that could be defor-- deforested under legal protection of the state. As-- as new zones that will allow free investments of-- unmitigated investments of agri-businesses. And-- transforming-- peasants-- subsistent peasantry into actually sh-- not sharecroppers, but basically into agrarian workers.

And-- they're pushing the legislation as we speak today in the-- in-- in the congress, actually. It might be approved any time. If this gonna happen, then this-- the-- the-- the-- the thing about the ziders, is that will include-- public lands-- public lands-- which is forested.

And therefore, the government will be legalizing the deforestation and consequently, it has a very grave environmental impact. And-- so therefore the-- the-- the thing is how the economic government is gonna revise its economic policies, its economic future plans. Now, this is critical to understand. And-- please watch it, if-- if any one of you is watching the Columbian thing, look at ziders, Z-I-D-E-R. (CHUCKLE) Thank you.

BRIAN WINTER:

I guess the challenge comes-- and-- and after this question-- I wanna open things up to the audience. I-- I guess the challenge becomes-- I mean, I-- I don't think anyone doubts that-- a major change in drug policy in both these countries and the United States as a whole, I mean, it's clear that that would produce a radical paradigm change in these problems that we're talking about.

There's obviously-- there's been-- the debate has shifted here in the United States substantially in the last ten years in ways that-- many of us did not think was possible with what's been done in Colorado and-- and in other places. But that's just marijuana, right?

And it's hard for me, and I-- I-- I analyze Latin American politics. I don't analyze U.S. politics for a living. But I am American. It's hard for me to see a scenario in the next ten years under which cocaine, for example, could be legalized. And so then you find yourself asking, "Well, gosh, you know, ten years is a really long time. And so what can be done between now and then to kind of mitigate the effects of some of the problems that we're discussing here?" I mean-- we've touched on this a bit. But is there anything else kind of in that middle ground that we have not talked about yet that could make a difference?

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

BRIAN WINTER:

Yes, of course.

KENDRA MCSWEENEY:

I-- I think that's a great question. And I think the answer lies in what's gonna happen in-- at the UN here in New York in April. So the UN general assembly will be discussing drug policy reform and member states will be present. And it will be a wonderful opportunity to, first, acknowledge the many and varied-- collateral damages associated with-- conventional drug policy.

Of which the environment is one that I would argue has been overlooked. And one of the things-- one of the sort of intermediate measures is to turn to the communities within the UN and beyond that are dedicated to-- environmental protection, to indigenous rights and to rural development.

And talk to them about how their work is made so much more difficult by the prohibitionary zeal that is endorsed under the UN's-- office of drugs and crimes. So in other words, perhaps within the UN we can see a kind of rapprochement-- between these-- agencies that work in complete-- well, appear from the ground, to be working in-- in-- in a high degree of isolation from one other.

And begin to talk-- about how drug policy affects the work of other UN agencies. Because right now, you've got the UN Office of Drugs and Crime creating a climate that fundamentally undermines the goals-- championed by other-- agencies of the UN, particularly-- the UN Red Program, that's about reducing deforestation and degradation, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous People, the UN Development Program and the UN Environment Program.

They have really not had a substantive way to-- shape-- drug policy. And now is the time for that conversation to begin. And I think that is the space from which new and interesting policies will emerge. I-- I-- I-- I wouldn't presume to suggest what they would be. But those are the people who should be talking about 'em. And they should be talking about them as equals at a common table. Thanks.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

NAZIH RICHANI:

I know it'd be-- maybe an outlandish idea is-- is to start for governments-- importing cocaine di-- directly, meaning-- and see the usage of cocaine for medical-- ends. So therefore-- if-- if the Western Europe-- European Union, the United States and-- Japan and the major industrial nations will embark on a-- on a project-- of-- themselves-- importing cocaine.

And therefore, try to see that the-- be-- because, you know-- in the 19th Century, early 20th, actually they experimented with cocaine here. And therefore it was used for medical purposes. So it's not-- very outlandish idea, if you look at the history of cocaine and cocaine production. The thing is-- if you wanna sync-- think outside the box-- meaning outside the-- the-- the-- the drug-- fighting regime, we need to think above it and below it. And-- (CHUCKLE) and-- and about it.

So therefore we'd l-- we'd l-- we need to look at the different dimensions, how we could really reach a solution for this endemic-- unending fight. So maybe-- the idea therefore, what-- what about suggesting-- in an international forum about governments started-- starting to absorb the-- the production of cocaine and maybe look for the usage of this and-- and the medical usage and the-- and the-- and other usages that could be-- thought of. And-- so basically-- just an idea.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

KATE HORNER:

I s-- suppose the--

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

KATE HORNER:

From my perspective of working with-- with colleagues on the ground-- and those that live in and depend upon the forest for their resources-- I think one of the things that we've seen in supporting them and their activism, is that to be a defender of land and the environment puts you immediately in peril.

And I think as was noted earlier, that this is fundamentally about land, either way you-- any way you look at it. And so I would say that in addition to the very important policy conversations that are taking place as we shift to-- away from some of these failed policies, I think there needs to be increased attention to how to ensure the safety and security of those that are on the front lines of this fight.

And I think that there's a lot of work that could be done-- from-- from my perspective, I think that the-- the work that's taken place in Columbia about providing additional protective services to those under threat is, in my view, unparalleled-- in the world. I don't-- I'm not sure of another institution that has-- those state provide services. I think there a lot of other actions that need to be taken. I think we need to increase the awareness of people under threat.

I would say maybe that as-- as a corollary to some of the additional points that were made about-- increased sovereignty in-- economic developments strategies, particularly in the agricultural space is one that urgently needs to be deployed. And one where I think you would find-- a great number of-- friendly allies to join the-- the-- the stakeholders.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

BRIAN WINTER:

Okay. Well, thank you. I have to admit, for this next part, I'm not quite sure how we're gonna do this. Do we have a microphone that members in the audience can

use? Or we'll ask 'em to come up here? Is that right?

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

BRIAN WINTER:

Or, you know, this is-- frankly, you know, this is a small enough room where I think-- oh, I'm sorry. For the-- it's being web-cast. All right, we'll-- please, if you have a question you'd like to ask, please-- address yourself to the microphone. You-- you had pole position on that one. So-- (CHUCKLE) you-- that's-- I think that's-- I think that's on now.

MALE VOICE:

So-- a comment and a-- and a question. So--

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

MALE VOICE:

What I think-- where-- the topic of the presentation is, is the-- the impact of cocaine prohibition on the environment. 'Cause I-- I think that's what you're really talking about. And I-- I-- wish you would say that. Because it feels to-- to be honest, it feels somewhat manipulative to hear it described as the impact of drug policy and to say drug policy.

If Open Society is advocating for cocaine-- legalization it-- I think it should just say so. And what I think you're-- the-- the-- paper that you put out is saying, is that cocaine prohibition is having a negative impact on the environment and that your hope is that at the UN-- general assembly, that you're going to be able to point to the environmental impact as one of the arguments against cocaine prohibition. And again, if that it what your-- the purpose, I-- I-- I would-- I'd like you to be a little more clear about that. And--

BRIAN WINTER:

That's certainly--

MALE VOICE:

And--

BRIAN WINTER:

--what I've gotten out tonight. (CHUCKLE)

MALE VOICE:

Right That's what I think we're h--

BRIAN WINTER:

But-- but please, what-- what's your question?

MALE VOICE:

And-- and if that-- so here's the question. If that is what you're saying, then-- I will-- I-- I imagine your position is that cocaine legalization is good for environment. And if that is what you're saying, could you tell us why that would be the case.

Because-- and-- and then just the question-- as well, for Kate. Kate, tell me if I'm wrong, but-- the impact that legal businesses are having on the environment-- may actually dwarf the impact of drug prohibition. I think I hear you saying that we need a better regulatory response to protect our forests-- and to-- to help the planet.

Not-- a deregulation effort. I don't really hear you saying that legalizing cocaine will protect our forests. And when you think about the impact that legal corporations or multi-national corporations are having on climate change and on-- on the environment, it's hard for me to understand how legalizing cocaine helps our environment.

BRIAN WINTER:

Okay, thank you. Who wants to start?

KENDRA MCSWEENEY:

Well, thanks very much-- for that provocation. I think-- you pulled out a really good point about the report. And the fact is the idea was to bring together the science that-- shows us that current drug policies are having-- unexpectedly negative impacts on the environment.

And the majority of that-- research has-- you're quite right. The bulk of the research on that link has been done-- in spaces that happen to be along the cocaine commodity chain. But not exclusively. The report sites-- spaces of-- opium, poppy production and marijuana also. We happen to be using-- the case of cocaine because

it's one that we're most familiar with. And it's one that is, in many respects, closest to home because it's concentrated in the Western Hemisphere. But what-- the processes we're talking about are absolutely-- mirrored in the global opium trade, in-- that is also a significant-- that is very-- significant in the Western Hemisphere also.

But in-- the Golden Triangle, in India. And-- so-- I-- I-- I apologize if the-- if the take away for you is that we're simply talking about cocaine. We're talking about all-- all licit grade A, whatever they're called-- schedule one narcotics here. And-- any that are cultivated, that is.

And (THROAT CLEARING) so-- we're talking also about marijuana production in-- California's national parks in-- the Blue Ridge Mountains and-- and all across the United States. The same dynamics are at work. I-- this report does not advocate for cocaine legalization. What it advocates for-- and I thank Nazih for bring that up. Because is this where-- is cocaine legalization inevitably leads? Absolutely not. Who knows where it will lead?

I-- I think it would be irresponsible to-- to say because trees are falling-- along the cocaine commodity chain we must legalize it. Absolutely not. That would be reckless. I think what we are ad-- what I certainly am ad-- vocating for is that all of the countries that are enrolled in-- the cocaine or the opium or the marijuana commodity chains that are suffering greatly due to, I would say, very misguided policies, be allowed to have a much greater say in how they want-- the-- the-- this fundamentally economic activity to be regulated and to open up the policy spaces for discussion.

Now, if the global policy discussion moves towards legalization of particular drugs, so be it. But that is not what we are advocating, I am advocating for here. This-- this discussion has never really made it to any big multi-lateral table. And the time to talk about it is now. That is what is-- being advocated for here.

GUILLERMO OPSINA:

May I?

BRIAN WINTER:

Yes.

GUILLERMO OPSINA:

Thank you. I'm trying to understand the-- the word, advocacy. And it's a very interesting word. I-- I try to understand the practice of people here-- working here-- working hard here f-- with the users of drugs. And I agree with you. I'm-- my propose or my-- and it's not work for advocacy or-- or-- of cocaine legalization.

But I'm interested in that this criminalization of the producers. Because it's peasantry people working the land to get an income in their ec-- domestic economies. And this criminalization of users because-- because it's people that is not criminal people. It's-- the (UNINTEL) different kinds of drugs. And cocaine and heroin is the classic drugs. But what happened with the diversity of synthetic drugs that they are produce-- in the-- I think, in the garage or in the basement.

Or-- there are people producing that. The matter or the issue of this criminalization or-- or legalization or any of kind of drug is what happen if everybody, everyone can produce drug and co-- and try with that. I don't know. I-- this is an-- very futuristic scenario. Or maybe it's so close that-- that we think about that. But this just that comment.

BRIAN WINTER:

Well, let me-- if you'll permit me, I wanna go to the next question. But--

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

KATE HORNER:

I-- it-- it-- it's totally valid to-- to raise the point about the-- the question of comparing the legal logging and illicit drug trafficking. Just to clarify, when I talk about the-- the role of demand-side policies to address illegal logging, what we are fundamentally trying to do is make the laws of the producer country matter in international trade.

Because historically, they haven't. It's been a no-questions-asked market. And what that means then is that transnational organized crime has a disproportionate impact on natural resource governance, anti-corruption efforts. And-- that's not to say that-- that all logging is good.

But the fact that the laws on the books have been so fundamentally undermined by the transnational organized crime in the logging sector, is what is trying to be addressed. And that, I think, maybe leads to the second point, which-- at least when-- when I think about some of the impacts of drug policy that we see in the field, it's the-- the imposition of an agenda from outside that undermines economic development strategies, particularly through the crop substitution policies.

And the imposition of that agenda from outside, the undermining of natural resource governance at a country level, at a community level, by external actors is part of the impact that I think is so damaging at the country level and at the community level.

BRIAN WINTER:

Okay. Thank you. Sorry for almost stepping on your--

KATE HORNER:

No, that's fine.

BRIAN WINTER:

--your answer there. I wanted to ask-- and maybe you would like to come up to the microphone while I ask this-- this follow-up question that's essentially coming back to one of the questions you asked. Which I just-- the polemicist in me, found provocative. Which is would a world in which cocaine, in particular, was legalized inflict less environmental damage upon these areas that we've been discussing today?

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

KENDRA MCSWEENEY:

Well, l-- l-- I'll be very brief. I think it would be dangerous to speculate it. It absolutely-- will depend on how those laws would be implemented and by whom. So to get back to Kate's point-- if that is a bottom up solution that-- is proposed by transit nations, that's one thing. If it's a top-down-- if it's enacted as a top-down policy that-- comes at great-- cost, then-- then it wouldn't work. So-- I think we cross that bridge when we come to it.

BRIAN WINTER:

Nazih?

NAZIH RICHANI:

I-- I think it's mea culpa that-- (CHUCKLE) I open this-- debate, really. So it's my full responsibility. (THROAT CLEARING) The reason why I-- I-- I really-- the-- the-- the whole purpose is to-- start thinking outside the box. It's not really-- the-- the thing is about if you eliminate prohibition, you can police better.

Look at what happened, for instance-- when the alcohol was prohibited, right? And-- the-- the prohibition of alcohol in the United States produced counter-productively produces the mafia here, right? And then eventually when alcohol was legalized, then we can police more-- the-- the consumption of-- of alcohol.

Applying the same logic, we could use it-- also for cocaine. So why not? So the-- the thing is we have to devise-- we know that we've been fighting against this war, against drugs and have costed billions of dollars. And maybe trillions now. And we have I don't know how many agencies in the United States, about 26 agencies fighting this war on drugs, which is futile. And-- we've been fighting it for almost 30 years, lost

now. So it's time to start reflecting how effective was this policy and where is it leading to. So if we are-- shy of saying legalization or decriminalization, of thinking outside the box, I don't think this will solve the issue.

So the thing is to start thinking outside the box, okay? Now, if you legalize-- and I repeat, if you legalize, you can police. And therefore not only police-- protecting the environment-- protecting the environment is part of the policing and where to do that. Because at the end of the day, cocoa is a cash crop like any other cash crop, right?

So therefore planting this cash crop at the expense of food production, for instance, cannot be permitted, in terms of the sustainable economic development. So we need to balance it out. But we cannot do that except if we have legalization to police it and to control it. So that's the-- the entry point. That's why I suggested it as-- as a mean to-- to open a discussion. Thank you.

BRIAN WINTER:

Okay, thank you. Yes.

PAUL GILLMAN:

Hello. My name is Paul Gillman (PH). I'm with the Green Party in New York. And we do advocate an end to the drug war. And-- you know, you're talkin' about how the West African states, their laws aren't respected by the international community or pr-- multi-nationals.

But those states in West and East Africa are pretty much in the service of international Capitalism. And they're not meant to be respected by international capital. So the only way to combat that would be a mass movement. Because I don't expect top-down policy change to really change anything.

We need a mass-- and with that I-- I-- on a personal level, I've been studying the rise of the narco bourgeoisie in Mexico as a challenge to international capital, their hegemony. And it's not like they're-- they're any better. But I would like to know what the gross domestic product of the narco bourgeoisie is in Mexico and around the world. And where-- if you don't know, where can I find those statistics?

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

NAZIH RICHANI:

I have worked on the issue of the narco bourgeoisie thing and the-- maybe the-- the term itself-- I-- I coined it.

BRIAN WINTER:

So have I. (CHUCKLE)

NAZIH RICHANI:

Good. We don't have really-- the statistics that we have, the clearest one is on Columbia. And-- I mentioned the figure of $47 billion-- that-- basically were repatriated. But we do not have a total figure, for instance, how much money they have, the narco bourgeoisie in Columbia, for instance, or the narco bourgeoisie-- let alone, in the region. But we're talking definitely about-- Columbia alone in the last ten years or 15 years, they have repatriated $47 billion.

You can-- well, Mexico has emerged in the last-- five or six years as the leaders in the-- in the drug business. So we'll assume that definitely they have amassed-- (CHUCKLE) double that amount in the last-- few years-- double the amount of the--

PAUL GILLMAN:

'Cause I-- I have a long time ago, seen statistics where they say the percentage of-- narco money and-- even total underground black market money within the international banking community. I don't remember what those figures are.

But it's substantial. Something like-- anywhere from 20 to ten percent. And there's all these talks where if you remove that money, it'll be a huge economic blow to the-- Capitalist system. And in a sense, you know, they're playing-- on the one hand, the oppress it. And parts of the ruling class are for continuing to oppress the-- drug trade and all of that. You see this in articles in the *Times*, in the-- *Wall Street Journal*. And other parts are profiteering off it. So there's also factional fighting within the ruling classes on whether to suppress or continue the drug war.

BRIAN WINTER:

Okay.

NAZIH RICHANI:

One last thing-- look UNDC-- UNDC, they have statistics.

PAUL GILLMAN:

UNDC?

NAZIH RICHANI:

Yeah, yes.

KENDRA MCSWEENEY:

U-N-D-C.

NAZIH RICHANI:

Yeah, U-N-D-C. I pronounce it UN--

MALE VOICE:

UN--

NAZIH RICHANI:

UND-- O--

BRIAN WINTER:

O-- O-D-C.

NAZIH RICHANI:

DOC-- UNDOC.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

BRIAN WINTER:

Does anyone else have a question?

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

FEMALE VOICE:

So-- a lot of what I was-- hearing described-- sounds like this-- hollow frontier of colonization that is-- known throughout the-- the force of tropics. So a lotta-- what-- what was described regarding-- illegal crops. So I'm wondering, what is the evidence and what is the differential between this hollow frontier that you're-- have-- alluded

to in various forms, the one in Honduras or Guatemala or Columbia, and the hollow frontier in Ecuador and the hollow frontier in Brazil and the hollow frontier in-- even Suriname has a hollow frontier now. And so do we actually have any evidence that it's the prohibitionist policy that is conducive to exacerbating or somehow changing this-- you know, making it more dynamic?

BRIAN WINTER:

I for one, will admit my ignorance here and admit to not knowing what the hollow frontier is. Can anyone here-- would you like to explain that just quickly?

FEMALE VOICE:

Yeah, the-- the hollow frontier-- described in Ecuador, for example, it's-- you come in and you clear and you have shift in cultivation. And you burn a little bit and then the productivity goes down. And when the productivity goes down, you move on, right?

So and when you move on, you leave behind a place that's now taken up. And it can become properties. And you can-- you know, you can speculate on it. You can do all kinds of things. And that's responsible, for example, in Brazil, you know, those very high deforestation rates, they're not because everybody's feeding themselves. They're happening because there's a series of land grabs (UNINTEL PHRASE).

BRIAN WINTER:

Yeah. Okay. Thank you for that.

KENDRA MCSWEENEY:

I-- I think that's-- that's a great question and-- and really worthy of clarification. So ultimately, the question is are drugs causing all deforestation. Is the drug trade-- is the drug regime responsible? Clearly not. There is-- there-- deforestation happens for a host of reasons.

But one of the-- I'm working with the team-- including a lot of remote censors and land change scientists to really pull out the narco signal in-- land use change-- in Central America. But the algorithms that are being developed could be applied-- internationally.

And-- the difference between-- a group of peasants moving to the forest being displaced from-- some other areas and it's incrementally moving into the frontier and-- and a narco frontier is that what you get when-- when-- drug trafficking node develops, it typically develops in the heart of a-- of a remote area that is far from-- governance and-- and-- interdiction.

And what you'll see is a very different pattern of degradation and deforestation than you would see under a normal-- the nor-- the quote, unquote, "normal" development of a frontier. And that is characterized by very rapid-- transformation of forest to cattle pasture or-- and secondarily-- pl-- plantations.

And-- clearly, I mean, the-- the-- narco signal that you see from the satellites is-- is best described as an extremely highly capitalized massive transformation-- very rapid transformation of land. In the Brazilian Amazon, drug traffickers opened up a 300 hectare area in the space of three weeks.

That is-- a very large clearing that appear out of nowhere in the middle of a protected areas or in the middle of-- who has that kind of impunity, capital-- and-- nimbleness to-- to be so destructive. And-- w-- when-- wherever we have looked at this issue-- it is narco capital that is behind those sorts of activities. Thanks. Does that answer your question?

FEMALE VOICE:

Kind of.

KENDRA MCSWEENEY:

Kind of? (CHUCKLE)

BRIAN WINTER:

Hi, would you like to come up to the microphone? I think we could probably--

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

GUILLERMO OPSINA:

But-- just--

BRIAN WINTER:

Of course, yeah. I'm not in the business of--

GUILLERMO OPSINA:

I'm trying to understand that what-- which is the difference. Because-- for example, when-- when we-- review-- in satellite, in imaginary from areas colonized for-- colos-- colonized with--

MALE VOICE:

Colonized?

GUILLERMO OPSINA:

Colonized with, for example, cocoa-- not cocaine, with cocoa plant. That confi-- make a configuration of big cells that relate the-- the cultivate area and-- the advance of-- a new areas and-- and land abandon. And it's a very small areas. It's-- it's particularly-- people clear a piece of-- of forest-- almost like escondile (PH)--

MALE VOICE:

Hidden.

GUILLERMO OPSINA:

Yeah, because it's some-- something illegal. It's-- people is trying to-- done-- done-- detect them from any mean. But in the case of-- of soy-- soy is-- is soy-- soy beans-- soy beans or another colonization process, mainly inducer process or part African (UNINTEL) in-- in-- in Columbia.

This is another-- another footprint in the land shaft-- in the landscape. It's another footprint. But this is the-- the remote sensing. This is the-- the-- the-- the eye-- the eyes of God. You know, you-- you can see from the satellite and that. But what happen in the fields with the people behind the-- the process of colonization, there are difference also. Is-- there are very difference.

JULIA WILLGORIN (PH):

Hi. I'm Julia Willgorin and Green Party of New York. One of the things-- thank you very much for all the information you provided. It was very, very interesting and useful to know what's-- it is about the environment that's being damaged through the-- the drug trafficking process.

But what I didn't hear-- it all sort of-- it was passive voice. It happens. You know, at the-- we-- I can sit here. And as some-- somebody that has run for office and say I have had as a policy-- I run for controller in New York State-- legalizing drugs because of the re-- respon-- what happens as a result of drugs being illegal in-- in the United States.

And I was sitting for the better part of an hour waiting for somebody to mention that elephant in the room before it got mentioned by somebody that came up here to ask a question. And then you-- you still all sort of drew back from saying, "Who's

responsible for the fact that drugs are illegal?" The-- obviously-- it-- the-- the United States is a major, major driver of-- of-- the illegality process. And it doesn't get mentioned. And I was very taken with your-- discussion of-- of what's happens to small-- farmers when they are forced to-- go to single-- export crops.

That happens because the IMF drives (CHUCKLE) it. And yet as-- as interesting as everything you said here or you just left the top out. You know, how does it happen? It happens because at some major level-- laws are passed. And I-- I-- I just think it would add to the-- the process, if in fact do you-- didn't sort of leave it up-- it happened. It didn't-- it happened. Somebody did it. (CHUCKLE)

BRIAN WINTER:

Okay. Well, thank you. Does anybody wanna react to that?

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

BRIAN WINTER:

Okay, well we could take a few questions. And then I think we're nearing the end of the night. But-- we-- we have time for at least two more questions-- three more questions.

MALE VOICE:

So-- so there are a few models that are represented in Capitalism. And I think the reason why Capitalism is so--

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

MALE VOICE:

--enticing or so attractive is because of perfect competition, which is the idea that everybody h-- but unfortunately we see the monopolization happens and that's evident, that usually ends up as the-- as the f-- so-- the impact of drug policy on the environment might be-- a good precursor to the impact of Capitalism on the environment.

Because that's really what it's about. Guillermo was talking about if everyone had a plant in their home that would be different, we wouldn't have to worry about-- you know, so this idea of legalization, I'm not so sure how that all fit into it. But the-- the concept of going back to what you were saying about Capitalism, that seems to be the underlying culprit of the whole process in general, is it not?

BRIAN WINTER:

Okay, thank you.

MALE VOICE:

So how-- I mean, that's rhetorical. As-- seems like everything is rather rhetorical here. So is there-- I mean, if the policies--

KENDRA MCSWEENEY:

Hey. (CHUCKLE)

MALE VOICE:

I mean, it has to be, right? So if the policy--

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

MALE VOICE:

So if the policies are failing, maybe we should look at models that can represent a better perfect marketplace or perfect competition in Capitalism that-- and I realize that we've been trying to do this ever since the-- the birth of Capitalism here in the States, I suppose.

But it hasn't worked out so well. So how can we actually gear or create some sort of-- a policy that can't be-- that can't be failed or fail proof? How can we do that when we have-- these sort of issues going on? And I realize this is kind of-- a funny, maybe immature question. But it seems like Capitalism is the largest impact-- it-- it seems to have the most impact on the environment. And that all goes back to the conversation.

BRIAN WINTER:

Okay. Thank you.

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

BRIAN WINTER:

Well, we're-- we're taking a couple at a time here.

FEMALE VOICE:

Hi. Well, first, I'd like to thank you all for a really interesting-- discussion. I've got a couple of questions perhaps. First, I was working early this year at UNAP, incidentally-- where a lot of our work focused on-- transnational organized crime and trying to control-- wildlife trafficking, natural resource trafficking and all the financial flows that-- arise from that.

Which is a huge problem for forests, as you mentioned, and all kinds of natural resources including-- minerals and even endangered species. So one of the issues that I was looking at is how none state actors-- in conflict-- like, conflicted regions kind of get into that trade and-- and are able to exploit natural resources that are in other pa-- parts of the world, they're legal-- resources-- legal commodities and traffic them out.

They then-- launder them into-- into-- you know, through secondary markets in-- into, like, legal economies. So I'm just wondering how-- le-- legalizing or-- or somehow normalizing drugs and co-- co-- like, coca plantations, how will that really help, you know, to minimize the-- the sort of pernicious aspect of the drug trade, seeing as so many non-state actors are already involved around the world in drugs.

And we-- we can-- even talk about ISIS in Syria who actually profiting off of marijuana. And other, you know, narco-trafficants in-- in Latin America. I-- I don't know. Is that clear? Secondly, I traveled also in South America and I met people who had bee-- formerly been child slaves or child laborers on-- I guess that's slavery-- on coca plantations.

And it seemed to me that-- you know, we talk about indigenous land rights and securing land tenure for indigenous people. But-- a lot of-- a lot of the plantations in-- in Latin-- in Columbia, at least, are not necessarily-- like, owned by indigenous people. They're not run by indigenous people or-- or-- or at least controlled by them. So how will, like, normalizing the drug agricultural industry-- help in securing indigenous land tenure and prevent it from becoming, like, a large-- just-- another kind of Capitalist sector of the economy, controlled by-- corporations or large owners of capital? Thanks.

BRIAN WINTER:

We'll do one more and then we'll-- we will do our best to work our way through all of these. I mean, these-- these-- these are good questions. Thank you.

FEMALE VOICE:

I-- I'd like to-- thank you for this very educational-- panel. And-- just that fact, that this is an education for all of us. And-- can we pull together a curriculum for our schools? Is-- if we do not have users, we don't have buyers. And then we don't have a

market. In the U.S., we did have a say no to drugs program. I'm not sure how effective that was. (CHUCKLE)

BRIAN WINTER:

Okay. Thank you. You know, I-- I just wanted to start-- just briefly-- a brief statement as-- as kind of the moderator of this and as somebody does programming like this for a living in my organization. You know, we've touched on some broad issues tonight.

We've touched on drug legalization. We've touched on Capitalism during the-- initial presentation that-- that Nazih made. At point, you know, a decision is made to-- bring a narrow or a somewhat narrow focus to these discussions. I mean, we have here-- tonight, we have-- a director of forest campaigns.

We have a professor of Geography. We have-- a researcher and team leader-- at-- socials-- comparative social studies group. And we have an associate professor and director of Latin American studies. Each of these people is very esteemed in their field. But I-- I-- I think the purpose tonight was to produce and present-- some very specific findings that were made in this report. And to debate the points around it. And certainly-- you know, you could argue-- that Capitalism, for example, is-- is at the root of these things. But that was just not-- that was not originally the mission-- tonight. So on that note-- I'd like to invite our-- our panelists to-- to-- to-- answer the-- the-- the questions as they see fit.

KENDRA MCSWEENEY:

Well, thanks. And I-- I don't wanna take too long. I mean, clearly the conversation is just beginning. One of the reasons for writing this report was to provoke discussion on the links between drug policy and the environment. And I think that's exactly what we're doing.

In answer to your-- questions-- we're talking about the 1961 UN convention on narcotic drugs and that must be reformed. And that is exactly what will be debated in April and at UNGAS. And let's keep a close eye on that process. And-- and push for transparency around the discussion. And hope that-- these issues get debated.

Two, yes-- I mean, it's Capitalism. But we're not gonna see huge changes in Capitalism any time soon. What we can see are changes in the way-- in the particular form that Capitalism takes. And right now, we're living under a regime of neo-liberal-- globalization which favors financial deregulation, opening up of markets and a host of other things that absolutely benefits illicit actors-- very well-connected elite actors at the top.

And creates-- great disparities in-- between the winners and the losers. And right now, what we're seeing is the-- the winners in the drug war are the banks and the many well-positioned-- top, elite actors-- across the spectrum. And the losers are not

just the people dying in the streets every day and-- and across the world in drug-fueled conflicts. But-- the global environment.

Therefore we are all losers when it comes to-- issues like climate change because-- this is not an insignificant driver of-- of-- climate change. Third-- I think the issue-- why does-- why does securing indigenous land rights help-- why would-- how is that related to what we're talking about?

Well, the indigenous people I work with in-- eastern Honduras and the Mosquito Coast have-- have very few tools at their disposal with which to-- protect themselves when drug trafffickers move into their lands. And one of the few things they could mobilize would be land title. When they don't have it, they're really left just petitioning the government for help.

And, of course, the government-- has-- has looked away. They filed something like 300-- reports of land invasion to absolutely no effect. So they need something-- they need tools to work with and push back. And land tenure is one way to start that.

About educating-- I forgot where that person is. The-- the head of the Scotlet-- the s-- the head of the Scottish Botanical Garden told me that they have run an extremely successful program. Apparently, Scotland has the highest per capita cocaine use in the world.

And by running a program that educated-- cocaine users in Scotland about the cost of their habit, they were able to really change the discussion around-- you know, the just-say-no-to-drugs discussion. So I-- I thought that was inventive. And it came out of the botanical garden.

And it gets back to the linking the two ends of the commodity chain. And it's not the peasants growing the crops who are doing well off of this trade. And it's not the users who are doing well. It's all the middle men and they are mostly men-- who are making a killing and doing a lot of damage-- in the process. Thank you.

NAZIH RICHANI:

Well-- maybe the-- one of the-- (CHUCKLE) over-arching-- conclusions would be-- for a great number of years, UNDOC-- UNDOC, right?

KENDRA MCSWEENEY:

UNODC.

NAZIH RICHANI:

U-- UNDC-- (CHUCKLE) had depended on a policy that-- is-- is based on the issue of policing-- making too costly for the peasants to continue the production of-- cocoa. And therefore-- emphasizing the deterrent aspect of-- of the drug production process.

I think this has to be reversed. We need to create-- incentives to the peasants-- to produce-- other crops. And-- and this cannot be done without a sustainable development strategies-- for most of the nations involved in the cocoa production, ie: Columbia, Peru, Bolivia.

And-- so-- in a way, if I want to recommend just-- in-- in-- succinctly, is to develop-- a sustainable development strategy that relies on the subsistence peasant economy and revitalize this economy and support that economy. All agencies of the United Nations, all groups, NGOs must be in the task of supporting the peasant economy in the region.

The reason why, this is the-- the peasant economy-- the subsistence peasant economy in Latin America and also in Africa, is the basic provider of food. Sixty percent of most of the food products in Latin America, in spite of all new liberalization and all the economic policies and all the problems that had-- affected the glo-- rural economy, still, this is the most resilient one.

The lesson drawn is they have peasant 300-- dependant on cocoa to subsidize its food production, to subsidize it, not to substitute it totally. So consequently therefore, develop a strategy-- international strategies to support the subsistence peasant economy, specifically in the cocoa producing nations, could be another mean of fighting or containing the-- the-- the drug epidemic.

So therefore again, this is thinking outside the box again. And therefore it's-- it's not thinking in one uni-linear or one-- dimension or one component of fighting-- this-- war and maybe bringing it to a-- a more s-- suitable conclusion. And that's it. I will stop here.

KATE HORNER:

Just to the question from the woman from-- previously at UNEP about-- ill-- illegal logging. I-- I-- one-- maybe-- unique feature of the rosewood trade is that it's primarily destined for Chinese markets. Unlike the U.S., Europe and Australia, China does not have currently in place a prohibition on illegally sourced wood products.

So-- the-- the Chinese market is fundamentally a no-questions-asked market. And the-- those responsible for importing are not asked to understand their supply chain at all. They h-- they bear no responsibility for where they're sourcing from and what the impacts of their sourcing policies are.

And it follows from efforts to protect species in Southeast Asia and Madagascar that you're seeing shifting marketplace. I-- I guess I-- I say that as-- as a distinction-- because in this context where you have essentially capital accumulation in the major consuming countries of the world, they should bear some responsibility for their sourcing practices, right?

And I think that is-- not entirely at odds with-- I think with some of the ideas that have been put together here about potential reforms and the drug policy. And I think

that it goes to the point of empowering and lifting up local governance. And not-- either impacting it with transactional organized crime or imposing an outside agenda on it.

BRIAN WINTER:

Okay. Well-- thanks everybody. Thank you to the-- Open Societies Foundation. Thank you to all of our panelists. Great discussion. We touched on a lot. Thanks to all of you for being here. And, you know, I think some of us are gonna stick around after the discussion's over. So-- thank you and good night. (APPLAUSE)

* * *END OF TRANSCRIPT* * *