



THE BECKLEY FOUNDATION LATIN AMERICAN CHAPTER IN GUATEMALA



In April 2012, President Otto Pérez Molina of Guatemala invited Amanda Feilding and the Beckley Foundation to establish a Latin American Chapter in order to advise him and his Government on drug policy reform. The President requested that the Beckley Foundation:

- develop a series of alternative drug policy options aimed at reducing the violence and corruption suffered by Guatemala and other countries as a result of the current policies
- produce a report analysing the impact of current prohibitionist drug policies on Guatemala and the wider region
- convene an Advisory Board of the world's leading experts to help us in the development of proposals for reforming national and international drug policies
- raise Guatemalan and international public awareness of the urgent need for drug policy reform
- facilitate confidential, high-level drug policy meetings among Heads of State and their senior representatives.

THE BECKLEY FOUNDATION'S PROPOSALS: *PATHS FOR REFORM*

The Beckley Foundation's director, Amanda Feilding, presented the Foundation's initial drug policy proposals, entitled *Paths for Reform*, to the President and his key advisors in January 2013. The proposals were enthusiastically received.

The President and his senior ministers have incorporated our proposals into international announcements and the draft Declaration for the Organization of American States General Assembly in June 2013. This meeting, to be held in Guatemala, will take "Alternative Strategies for Combating Drugs" as its central theme. The proposals in the *Paths for Reform* included:

- initiating a campaign of public engagement in order to raise knowledge and awareness, and involve civil society in the process of reform
- creating a legal poppy crop for the production of opioid medicines, in place of the currently illicit crop on which many subsistence farmers depend
- decriminalising possession of drugs for personal use,



including the cultivation of a limited amount of cannabis, and working towards a system of legal regulation

- strengthening the legal distinction between minor drug offences and major offences related to transnational organised crime, and lowering or eliminating sentences for minor offences
- developing guidelines for police and prosecutors, prioritising the detection and prosecution of violent and serious crime while assigning low priority to prosecuting minor drug-related offences
 - continuing to develop and expand talks with regional neighbours and the international community on drug policy reform, including alternative approaches to the international traffic of cocaine.

Speaking at Davos, the President announced that the Government was investigating the legalisation of the poppy crop and the regulation of drug markets – a position he reiterated on an official visit to Spain in February 2013.

THE BECKLEY FOUNDATION LATIN AMERICAN CHAPTER IN GUATEMALA LAUNCHED JULY 2012



THE TIKAL SUMMIT

In order to further high-level dialogue on drug policy among Latin American leaders, Amanda Feilding proposed in September 2012 that a summit of regional Heads of State be convened to discuss the issue.

Since then, she has been working with President Pérez Molina on the development of this proposal, and has been in discussions with the Carter Center about President Carter chairing the meeting.

Plans for the meeting were officially announced by the President and George Soros at Davos. The current plan is as follows:

- The summit will take place in Tikal, Guatemala, over two days in the autumn of 2013.
- The first day will be a confidential meeting of Heads of State to discuss Latin American drug policies, with a view to developing alternatives to dealing with the challenges posed by the use of, and the trade in, illicit drugs. President Carter has indicated that he would hope to be available to preside as chair of the meeting.
- The second day will be a meeting of the Presidents together with key global business leaders, who will highlight the devastating effects of the current prohibitionist policy on stability and security, and the threats that it poses to investment and economic development.

ABOUT THE BECKLEY FOUNDATION

The Beckley Foundation was founded by Amanda Feilding in 1998, with the goal of reforming global drug policy by promoting evidence-based, health-oriented, harm-reducing, cost-effective policies which respect human rights. It is now a leading international drug policy think-tank, and has produced many influential academic publications on both policy and science.

The Foundation has hosted a series of international drug policy meetings, mainly at the House of Lords in London. It has written, commissioned and published over 40 books, reports and briefing papers on drug policy issues, including the seminal *Global Cannabis Commission Report* (2008). Its *Roadmaps for Reforming the UN Drug Conventions* was published in 2012, and a *Cost-Benefit Analysis of a Regulated and Taxed Cannabis*

Market in England and Wales is forthcoming in 2013. In November 2011 it launched the *Global Initiative for Drug Policy Reform* at a meeting at the House of Lords attended by members of the Global Commission on Drug Policy and high-level representatives of 14 countries interested in drug policy reform.

Simultaneously, the Foundation published a *Public Letter* calling for an end to the War on Drugs and an urgent debate on new approaches, which has now been signed by nine Presidents – among them President Carter – twelve Nobel Laureates, and a host of other international dignitaries.

President Pérez Molina was the first incumbent Head of State to sign the *Beckley Public Letter*, followed by President Santos of Colombia, marking an important shift in global drug policy.