

UNITED NATIONS  
INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS  
CONTROL BOARD

INCB



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Vienna International Centre, P.O. Box 500, A-1400 Vienna, Austria  
Telephone: +43-1-26060, Telefax: +43-1-26060-5867 / 5868, Telex: 135612 uno a  
E-Mail: [secretariat@incb.org](mailto:secretariat@incb.org) Internet Address: <http://www.incb.org/>

Telefax

To: Mr. Lousberg, Chief  
Address: Inspectorate for Health Care  
Ministry of Public Health  
Den Haag – The Netherlands

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Fax No.: 00031 – 70 – 340 71 59

From: Herbert Schaepe, Secretary  
International Narcotics Control Board

Subject: International control of the preparation "ayahuasca"

Dear Mr. Lousberg,

I would like to refer to your facsimile of 20 December 2000 concerning the traditional use of controlled substances, in particular the use of a preparation called "ayahuasca" by religious groups in the Netherlands.

The above mentioned issue was consulted by the INCB Secretariat with the Scientific Section and the Legal Advisory Section of the United National International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP). It is our understanding that "ayahuasca" is the common name for a liquid preparation (decoction) for oral use prepared from plants indigenous to the Amazon basin of South America, essentially the stem bark of different species of a jungle vine (*Banisteriopsis* sp.) and the tryptamine-rich plant *Psychotria viridis*. According to the scientific literature, ayahuasca commonly contains a number of psychoactive alkaloids, including DMT which is a substance included in Schedule I of the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances.

No plants (natural materials) containing DMT are at present controlled under the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances. Consequently, preparations (e.g. decoctions) made of these plants, including ayahuasca are not under international control and, therefore, not subject to any of the articles of the 1971 Convention.

Yours sincerely,

Herbert Schaepe  
Secretary of the Board