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An NGO with special status to the Economic & Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS STATEMENT

Our attention and that of the entire republic of Kenya has been drawn by the petition that was been submitted today to the Milimani Law Court of Kenya by the Rastafarian Association of Kenya seeking to legalize marijuana on religious grounds.

OUR POSITION WHICH IS THE SILENT VOICE OF MAJORITY

First of all we would like to oppose this move and condemn it with the strongest terms possible based on the following facts both by the Kenyan laws and international treaties and convention that Kenya is a signatory under the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and other international bodies mandated by other state parties to oversee and coordinate issues related substance use globally

PSYCHOTROPIC AMENDMENT BILL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Kenyan Constitution provides room for any law to be amended that it be subjected to Public Participation. According to the Psychotropic amendment bill which is at the cabinet stage awaiting presidential ascend, It was subjected to public debate and open for public comments by NACADA- Authority, Kenyans gave their views on what they think and what they have in mind, we thought that they would have given their contribution for it to be considered at this level, it is the only bill that classifies Marijuana as a harmful substance and not safe for human consumption, our question is why now, as much as they have the right to express their opinions through other arms of Government?

THE UNITED NATIONS VOTE ON MARIJUANA AND WHAT IT MEANS

Secondly, we would like to request the Rastafarian association of Kenya to stop deceiving Kenyans that the United Nations voted to legalize Marijuana. On 2nd of December 2020 the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs voted to reschedule the cannabis plant and resin by removing it from the list of the most restricted schedule which is schedule IV, of the 1961 single convention on Narcotics Drugs, and the World Health Organization was tasked to share its

recommendations and findings to the commission for voting, they would have used that channel to also share their concerns, which they did not.

Out of the Eight Recommendations submitted by the World Health Organizations to the Commission on Narcotics Drugs in December, seven were rejected and only one was endorsed, this means that member states can access cannabis for medical and scientific purposes, this makes it clear that it does not give room for recreational neither religious purposes as per the petition tabled by the Rastafarian Association of Kenya to the Milimani Court in Nairobi, Kenya.

RELIGION PROTECTION BY STATE

Thirdly, According to the Constitution of Kenya 2010, Chapter four on the Bill of Rights, under sub article 2 clause two, it is clear that Kenya as state has given respect to each and every citizen of this country under the laws the right to Worship, so claims by the Rastafarian Association of Kenya that they have been misunderstood and Stigmatized based on their belief on Marijuana is baseless and holds no water before the court of law both in Kenya and at the international Level.

RELIGION AND MARIJUANA

A lot of Claim by the Rastafarians Movement which the Rastafarian Association of Kenya Maybe part of it states that the Holy Bible (Revelation 22:2) has allowed Marijuana for Spiritual meditation, this is a total lie, this is what it says as per the new revised Standard Version, “.....through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life, with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” let them come clean and clear where Marijuana has been mentioned from this chapter

It should be made clear that Marijuana is Marijuana and the publishers of the holy book, a book that we respect a lot would have mentioned it as Marijuana and stated it in this verse clearly, we therefore rubbish those claims and ask them to respect their religion and other religions more so the bible and not drag it in this debate for their own personal use.

MINORITY VERSES MAJORITY

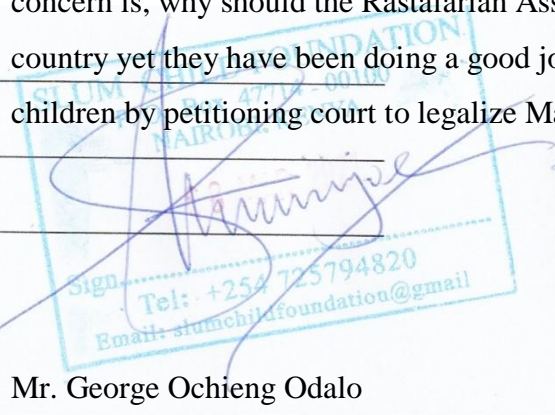
We would also like to make it clear that the deception by the Rastafarian Association of Kenya that Many Countries are in support of marijuana legalization is a total lie to the world and they

should withdraw that statement, look at the countries that have legalized Marijuana against those that have not legalized, it is clear that the majority have not legalized marijuana.

CHILDREN PROTECTION

Finally we would like to make it clear that according to the Children Act 2010, Part two, article 16 which states as follows, “Every child shall be entitled to protection from the use of hallucinogens, narcotics, alcohol, tobacco products or psychotropic drugs and any other drugs that may be declared harmful by the Minister responsible for health and from being involved in their production trafficking or distribution” meaning that legalization of the weed will give room to expose children to the harm which will go contrary to this law and against article 33 of the United Nations Children Rights Convention and Article 28 of the African Charter on the rights and welfare of children all of which Kenya is a signatory to.

In relation to this, close to two years ago, Kenya celebrated the 30 years of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child by sharing a very positive recommendation to the United Nations Committee on the rights of the child, that other states parties are looking forward to replicate, some of these recommendations which included the protection of children from harmful use of substances that are the best evidence based interventions that carry the name of Kenya high. This year the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children will be marking the 30 years of its ratification, Kenya as a state party will make its submission to the Committee on the best evidence based practices on which they have and are still conducting, this include the protection of children from harmful substances among other best practices, our concern is, why should the Rastafarian Association of Kenya tarnish the name of our beloved country yet they have been doing a good job especially when it comes to the protection of children by petitioning court to legalize Marijuana which will cause more harm than good?



Mr. George Ochieng Odalo

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Chair, **Alcohol and Substance Use Prevention Practitioners Association of Kenya**

Chair and International Commissioner, **East Africa Network for the Prevention and Treatment of Substance Use**