

**Remarks for Michel Perron, Chair of the Vienna NGO
Committee on the Occasion of the special event of the
fifty-sixth session of the Commission on Narcotic
Drugs, devoted to the commemoration of the United
Nations International Day against Drug Abuse and
Illicit Trafficking
June 26, 2013 – Vienna, Austria**

Mr. Chair, eminent persons, Mr. Fedotov, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. I am pleased to take the floor on behalf of the Vienna NGO Committee (VNGOC).

I join others in congratulating the UNODC Executive Director and his staff on the launch of the World Drug Report.

This substantive analysis of drug trends, seizures and emerging substances is a key component required to guide us all towards the objectives adopted at the 2009 HLS. It is also fitting that it is released here in Vienna and on this the international day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking.

My comments will focus on three specific aspects related to the preparations for the 2014 high-level review of progress made by Member States on the *Political Declaration and Plan of Action*.

The first is on the substantive contributions of NGOs towards this progress review

As part of the 1998-2008 review process which informed the priorities of the current Plan of Action, the VNGOC engaged in a process entitled Beyond 2008.

Over 900 NGOs from 145 countries were involved and they developed a consensus-based series of recommendations for the Commission, Member States, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and international organizations to consider. We are pleased to report that many of those recommendations have since been adopted.

Further, the VNGOC has initiated an annual informal Civil Society Hearing which allows for a direct exchange of

views and information between Member States and NGOs.

Our second informal Civil Society hearing, held in March of this year, focused specifically on the theme being addressed this morning and our conclusions then are relevant to today's discussion.

Our more than 120 member organizations span the entire globe and are active in all three priority themes of the Plan of Action – namely demand reduction, supply reduction and money laundering.

We have shown the Commission how the work of NGOs contributes to advocacy, harm reduction, prevention, treatment and care and recovery services. These activities range from small local projects to national and international organisations with large numbers of volunteers or members.

While the specific nature of NGO actions differ within these, the fact remains that our members represent a

significant and tangible strategic asset for your government to partner with.

Further, we have demonstrated how NGOs have taken up the call to action from resolutions adopted by the Commission, such as with Resolution 55/7: “Promoting measures to prevent drug overdose, in particular opioid overdose.” In many countries NGOs have taken the lead in promoting effective actions to reduce overdose deaths and are working with governmental organizations to develop overdose prevention initiatives.

Another is Resolution 54/13: “Achieving zero new infections of HIV among injecting and other drug users” where the UNODC led an effective outreach and partnership with NGOs in February of this year on this specific topic which was viewed by all as a very positive and tangible step forward. I urge you all to monitor this work as it continues to mature.

Simply put, governments are being asked to do more with less. We have and continue to demonstrate the high return on investment of effective partnerships with NGOs.

Our request of you is to work with us to leverage our existing capital, professional and intellectual capacity with your plan of work.

To do so, we recommend a series of targeted initiatives in either demand/supply or money laundering be identified as part of the 2014 declaration that the Commission and NGOs can collaborate on and that progress on these be reported on annually.

The second area of focus for my remarks is on the process for the 2009-2014 review itself

The VNGOC appreciates the opportunity offered to its members by Mr. Fedotov for “non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, to provide information to support the high-level review”;

however, we also would like to see a clear signal from the Commission itself – the Extended Bureau and Member States - on how we can substantively participate and

contribute to the 2009-2014 review and preparations for the declaration of 2014.

In this regard, the VNGOC would like to recommend:

that NGOs be permitted to participate as observers at all inter-sessional meetings planned for this Fall

that Member States facilitate the participation of high level panelists for our third informal Civil Society Hearing planned for the 2014 HLS and

that the conclusions of our discussions at the informal Civil Society Hearing serve as part of the report of the 2014 HLS.

And finally, our third area of commentary is on recommendation for a way forward post-2014

We need Member States to support the engagement of NGOs as you yourself have called for in the Political Declaration. In order to assist in this regard, we are developing an innovative and comprehensive project proposal jointly with UNODC to do do just that.

We urge those interested member states able to contribute from their regular UNODC contributions a portion for this specific multi year project that will take us through to the 2016 UNGASS and allow for an enhanced collaboration between UNODC and NGOs in support of your plan of action.

And finally, as the Commission itself undertakes the second half of this 10-year plan, we would urge a closer linkage between the Political Declaration, the Plan of Action, and the yearly resolutions taken by the CND and priorities and thematic debates set at each of those meetings.

We recommend the Commission assign specific targets in terms of process, output or outcome to the three key priorities of the Plan of Action and to use its yearly meetings to track progress or identify relevant challenges to realizing these objectives.

In closing, Mr. Chair, the VNGOC and all of its members take their role seriously in terms of working with governments to evaluate, plan and succeed in achieving

the objectives of the Plan of Action. We wish for that work to be current, reflective of contemporary issues such as new psychoactive substances and above all, based on sound evidence and practice.

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs is the body vested with the fiduciary and policy authority and by extension – accountability – to get it right. Getting it right cannot be done by governments alone and we look forward to contributing to your mandate.

Thank you.