

**Thematic Debate of the 66th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on
Drugs and Crime as a Threat to Development
On the Occasion of UN International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking
26 June 2012 – New York**

JOINT STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice New York & Vienna

**Challenges in mainstreaming crime prevention into development initiatives, and ways of
improving the international community's coordinated efforts to address crime's adverse
impact on development**

Mr. President, distinguished delegates and colleagues,

We are honored to contribute to the 66th Session of the General Assembly on Drugs and Crime as a Threat to Development.

Civil society plays a key role in contributing to the development and implementation of national and international instruments and structures both to combat crime and victimization as well as to generate development initiatives. We challenge abuses, defend human rights, and identify systemic weaknesses. We advocate for, and propose, new initiatives and approaches for just and humane responses to both the victims and perpetrators of crime.

As noted by the President of the GA in his call for the thematic debate, "Transnational organized crime and drug trafficking is of growing concern and particularly illicit trade's broad impact on development. Few if any, countries are exempt." This underscores the reality that criminal behavior, with its many vectors, whether perpetrated by the State, by non-state actors or by private persons, and whether it occur in prosperous or developing countries, impedes the social and economic development of communities and states, as well as the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. President, this statement is made on behalf of the many NGOs and individual experts who belong to the Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. We represent a broad spectrum of NGOs with expertise on and deep concern for issues such as prisoners' and victims' rights, penal reform, long detention without trials, legal aid, torture, the death penalty, firearms, trafficking of persons, femicide, violence against women, women in the justice system, violence against children, youth in conflict, vulnerable groups who suffer social exclusion such as

minorities, migrants and the elderly, codes of conduct for the police, judiciary, and attorneys, corruption on all levels and by all actors, money laundering, cyber crime, environmental crime, illegal trade in artifacts and wildlife and more.

We range in our views of the role of UNODC regarding development. Some, while acknowledging the evident connection between economic development and crime, and that poverty, underdevelopment, and lack of opportunities have much to do with drug cultivation, trafficking, and other criminal activities, still feel that the growing social and economic inequities in societies have much more to do with ordinary crimes and that therefore — rather than becoming merely another development agency – UNODC’s mission should focus on “the individual’s unfortunate fate rather than the larger economic environment.” These NGOs are therefore very hesitant about “mainstreaming drug control and crime prevention in development initiatives” and “the role of the criminal justice sector in promoting the Millennium Development Goals”.

The Alliance stresses that a strong UN program on drugs and crime enables the maximum contribution needed to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

We also believe that no member of the international community can speak of any crime without acknowledging its victims and their rights. Particularly in the context of promoting sustainable development, we call on all States to adopt and implement appropriate legislation, policies, and practices for giving them a voice, protecting and assisting them. Not only would Justice be realised both for them and for their societies, but healed and integrated victims/survivors can then be fully engaged as equal partners in sustainable development and become part of the solution rather than a continuing part of the silent chronic problem.

Specifically, we call for the establishment of an expert group combined of governments, UN, expert NGOs and victims, to study specific implementation strategies to combat crime and ensure sustainable development and to make recommendations for relevant mechanisms in the implementation of, for example, the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and its protocols without further delay.

We also call on Member States to engage civil society in the development and implementation of crime prevention measures according to A/RES/65/228, to integrate crime prevention and anti-corruption strategies to advance justice, equity and the possibility of achieving sustainable development, and to implement the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).

Further, we encourage UNODC and other UN agencies present to take greater advantage of the expertise and implementing capabilities available among non-governmental organizations and to better utilize their capacities to assist people in need.

Specifically, we urge greater involvement of NGOs in the country review mechanisms of the UN Treaties Against Transnational Organized Crime and Against Corruption.

We wish to note our appreciation for the openness of recent Chairs of the Narcotics and Crime Commissions towards NGOs. However we believe that there could be even more creative interaction between Member States and civil society in discussing ongoing critical issues especially as they pertain to the drafting of resolutions. There is a great deal of wisdom, expertise and practical experience residing in committed individuals and institutions. We believe that together we can promote the rule of law at the national and international levels.

As civil society organizations we look forward to maintaining our critical partnership in advancing the effectiveness of crime prevention and criminal justice. Together we will more effectively promote a culture of integrity, accountability, transparency and sustainability.

Thank you for your attention.