

**Draft VNGOC Speech
on the occasion of the
UN International Day Against Drug Abuse
Thematic Debate of the 66th Session of the UN General Assembly on
“Drugs and Crime as a Threat to Development”**

Mr President, distinguished delegates and colleagues, I take the floor on behalf of the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs.

The NGO Committee on Drugs draws its membership from a wide range of international and national NGOs who together have millions of members and provide a vast range of services to prevent substance misuse, provide treatment, care and recovery services, champion sustainable development and contribute this expertise to drug policy work.

The basis of our intervention today is drawn from our global consensus document entitled Beyond 2008 and which informed the 2009 political Declaration and Plan of Action.

Given the scarcity of time I will make 3 key points.

First - The future direction of drug policy is being openly debated. Destabilized national governments, rampant violence and corruption and a significant loss of life, all of which threaten sustainable, social and economic development and have undermined human rights are being pointed to as issues which need to be addressed. While many NGOs have very specific and often opposing views on the solution to the problem, we strongly recommend:

That any actions planned for or undertaken by Member States be evidence based, supported by scientific data, culturally and socially sensitive and evaluated for results, including analysis of any unintended consequences. This approach is essential for demand and supply reduction efforts as well as for sustainable alternative development.

Second, drug dependence is a health disorder. There is a documented relationship between a public health approach to drugs and the improved health outcomes of drug users, their families and the communities in which they live. Further the protection of children from illicit drug use is clearly referenced in the United Nations Convention of the Right of the Child. Simply put we know that evidenced based prevention, treatment and recovery programs work. We strongly recommend:

That MS ensure that demand reduction activities be considered as equally important to and as required as supply reduction activities and to make available alternative sanctions and disposition for drug related offences as permitted for under the Conventions.

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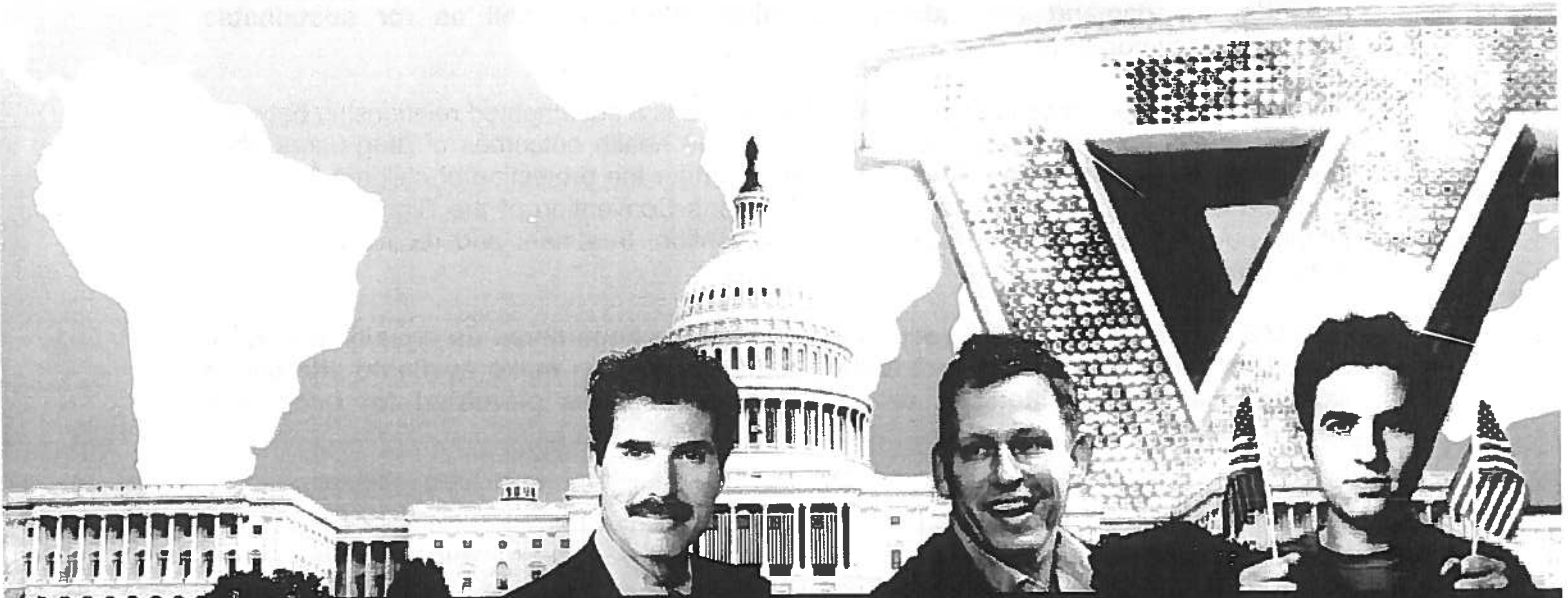
Contacts

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Third, the stewardship of global drug policy and development is a shared responsibility and NGOs have clearly agreed to fulfill their part of that partnership. Equally compelling is the tremendous financial and in kind assets that NGO possess. As the global community is faced with one financial crisis after another, it is blindingly clear that closer cooperation with NGOs can be a cost-effective investment measure for MS. As such we recommend:

That MS establish and support transparent and systematic mechanisms for partnerships with NGOs, including those most affected by drugs and drug policies such as our youth, in order to develop innovative new strategies to reduce the harms associated with drugs and that continue to threaten development.

Mr. Chairman

These recommendations are not new. In fact there is no shortage of knowing the problem and how best to resolve it. What is required is committed action on already agreed to plans of action. We are ready for that next step.

In closing, the VNGOC calls upon this body to ensure that each of the ECOSOC functional commissions and especially the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, honors the spirit and intent of the UN's stated commitment to working with NGO's and that the UNODC be equipped with the necessary resources to allow for these recommendations to be developed with NGOs and Member States immediately.

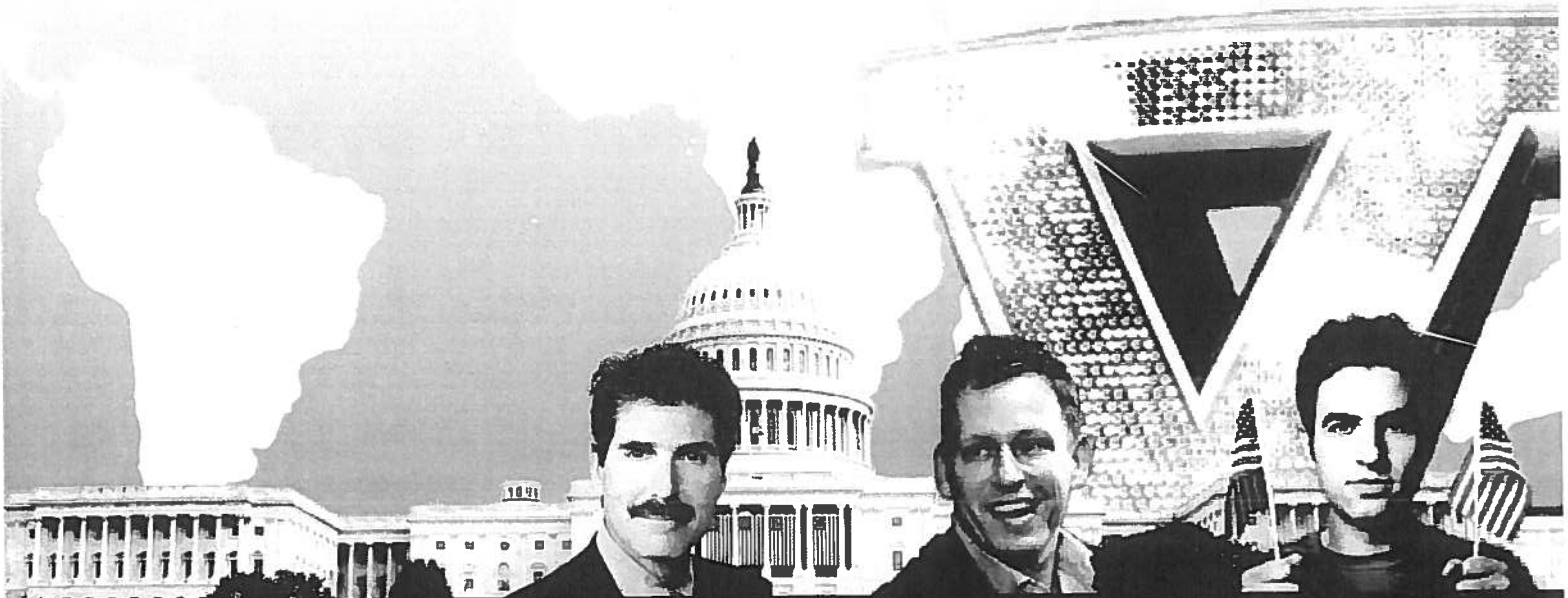
Thank you

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