



ADDRESS BY H.E. ADV BIENCE GAWANAS, COMMISSIONER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS TO THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE 52ND SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS, 11-12 MARCH 2009, UN OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME, VIENNA, AUSTRIA

Your Excellency, Chairperson of the High Level Segment of the CND,
Executive Director of the UNODC, Mr Costa,
Honourable Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I firstly wish to congratulate the Chairperson and Members of the Bureau on their election, assure the Chair of the support of the AU Commission, and thank her for the efficient manner in which she is conducting the meeting.

The AU Commission's programmes on Peace and Security, Social Development and Governance place great emphasis on fighting crime, corruption, terrorism and drug trafficking. Among my duties as Commissioner for Social Affairs, I have to manage ten (10) programmes in the social sector. Drug control is one of the priority programmes that we have prioritized for the next few years, firstly because of the cross-cutting nature of drugs and its linkages to peace, development and governance and secondly, because our social sector monitoring mechanisms have shown a dramatic increase in drug trafficking, abuse and associated crimes.

We have received reports indicating that drug seizures in all regions of the continent have doubled and even tripled over the past few months, compared to previous years' **annual** figures. Then, what is most disturbing, is that our youths are currently offered very small portions of cocaine, heroin and other substances for very little money to introduced them to the "feeling" of pleasure which we all know might be the start of life long psychological and physical addiction.

Political support

Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen,

Drug trafficking and abuse has, both in January 2008 and 2009, been on the main agenda of the Assembly of our African Union Heads of State and Governments. Last year, the AU Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention (2007-2012) was adopted by the Assembly following the recommendation of the AU Ministers in Charge of Drug Control. This Plan of Action is based on a balanced approach to drug control and crime prevention, including the prevention, treatment, law enforcement and social development components.

This year, the AU Heads of State took a decision to alert AU Member States regarding the threat of drug trafficking and associated security threats, and urged the Commission to intensify the fight against drug trafficking in collaboration with the UNODC and the international community.

Collaboration with strategic partners, the UNODC and Regional Economic Communities

As a first step in implementing the 2009 Assembly Decision, the AU should exploit its existing strategic partnerships, for example, with the European Union and South America to increase cooperation in the area of drug control on the basis of shared responsibility.

The AU Commission and the UNODC have developed a joint project for the implementation of the AU Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention, to run up to 2012. The project has been signed and its formal implementation will commence within the next two months. An important feature of the project is to strengthen the capacity of our Regional Economic Communities by providing them with programme officers dedicated to the implementation of the Plan. These officers will report to the AU Commission, and will work closely with Member States, research institutions, treatment services, the law enforcement and criminal justice sectors and of course, the regional offices of UNODC.

For the implementation of **all** the priority areas of the AU Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention, substantial technical inputs would be required from the UNODC.

Here we refer to the priority areas of capacity building in law enforcement and criminal justice administration, demand reduction and research, as well as the mainstreaming of drug and crime prevention measures into National Development Plans and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers.

We are grateful to the UNODC for their unwavering support to the AU. However, their continued support to Africa will depend on the support to their budget as pointed out by the Executive Director.

Finally, I wish to thank the UNODC for organizing this High-Level segment of the CND, as drugs and crime had to receive our prime attention in the current situation of the global community. In this regard, may I congratulate UNODC, Member States and other stakeholder partners who worked on the Draft Declaration and Plan of Action being considered at this 52nd Session of the CND, as it captures the fresh challenges to drug control very well.

I thank you.

