

## STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

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Thank you Mr. Chair, Your Excellencies Ministers Zadic and Cartabia, Madam Executive-Director, Excellencies and Colleagues,

I am honored to have been invited at this podium and very pleased to represent the civil society community on this occasion. The history of the Commission dates back 30 years: what has changed for us since 1992?

Prior to the establishment of the Commission, the role of civil society in the crime prevention and criminal justice programme was very prominent by the mere fact that the members of the Committee on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, which preceded the Commission, were being appointed in their personal capacity on the basis of their expertise. The establishment of the inter-governmental Commission responded to increased awareness of the emerging transnational crime threats requesting international cooperation as the most effective and holistic response thereto.

Thus, there was a transition from the *lead* of a Committee of individual experts to the *governance* by a Commission of governments. Indeed, GA resolution 152 of 1991 on the creation of the Commission underlines that “rising in crime is impairing the process of development and the general well-being of humanity and is causing general disquiet within our societies. If this situation continues, progress and development will be the ultimate victims of crime”. Therefore, States took on themselves the responsibility

and accountability for decisions and priorities in crime prevention and criminal justice. Certainly, the role of the civil society was fully acknowledged. When we talk, for example, about community-based crime prevention, alternatives to imprisonment, reintegration of offenders, support to victims of crimes such as human trafficking and smuggling of migrants, all these key elements of the work of the Commission are strongly rooted in civil society.

Yet, today we witness some anxiety as regards the engagement of civil society, to the extent that its role and presence need to be strengthened and supported. The Kyoto declaration includes a paragraph promoting “multi-stakeholder partnerships with the private sector, civil society, academia and the scientific community, and with other relevant stakeholders as appropriate”. While of course that captures the whole spectrum of engagement and participation, we are seeking more practical opportunities for access and meaningful contribution of civil society to all relevant decision-making and implementation processes regarding crime prevention and criminal justice.

Finally, allow me a personal note. I was privileged to witness the transition from the Committee to the Commission and to attend, in different capacities, all sessions of the Commission. Therefore, I fully appreciate the spirit of this celebration in the belief that governments and civil society must work together against crime.

We, the civil society, trust this is our shared commitment for the future.

Thank you.