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INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST TRAFFIC IN DRUGS

Letter dated 13 August 1987 from the Acting Permanent
Representative of Sweden to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General

With reference to the letter dated 28 October 1986 from the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, I have the honour to request that the attached report (see annex) from the NGO Forum held during the International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly in connection with the consideration of agenda item 104 of the agenda of the forty-second regular session.

(Signed) Sten STROMHOLM
Ambassador
Acting Permanent Representative of Sweden
to the United Nations

Annex

REPORT FROM THE NGO FORUM HELD DURING THE INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON DRUG ABUSE AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING

Submitted by the International Catholic Child Bureau, International
Council on Alcohol and Addictions, International Association
of Lions Clubs, International Social Services, Soroptimist
International, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts
and World Federation of United Nations Associations

INTRODUCTION

1. The NGO Committee on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, Vienna, and the NGO Committee on Narcotic and Substance Abuse, New York, established a Planning Committee to organize activities related to the International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.
2. In conjunction with the United Nations and the Swedish Government, an interregional NGO conference was held at Stockholm in September 1986. The findings of that conference were published as a preparatory document for the International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (A/CONF.133/6). They showed the involvement, experience and concern of NGOs in all aspects of drug abuse.
3. The NGO Forum held during the International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking continued and built on the work undertaken at Stockholm. The present report summarizes the findings of the Forum and, in conjunction with the report of the Stockholm conference, presents the approach of NGOs to tackling all aspects of drug abuse.

I. THE FORUM

4. The goals of the Forum were to facilitate the exchange of information and experience, to provide an opportunity to learn from others and to strengthen the work of NGOs in the drug abuse field. In terms of these goals, it was successful. Over 150 NGOs attended from around the world. Additionally, members of government delegations to the International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking attended meetings of the Forum. The exhibits of the work of NGOs provided a focal point for discussion about their activities and showed the key role they play in tackling drug abuse.
5. The programme of the Forum was designed to meet those goals. Day-long workshop sessions on specific themes were held over five days, with a different theme each day. Eleven panel sessions were held during the Forum in which invited speakers introduced topics for discussion, drawing on their experience and expertise and stimulating lively discussions. Space was also made available for informal working groups to meet and discuss in more detail some of the issues

arising from the workshops. The flexibility of the programme allowed for and encouraged informal meetings, where exchanges could take place across national and regional barriers.

6. The Forum was addressed at its opening by Mrs. Tamar Oppenheimer, Secretary General of the Conference, as well as Ms. V. Sauerwein, Chief of the NGO Liaison Unit/DIESA.

II. THEMES

7. Throughout the Forum certain themes emerged which are central to the approaches adopted by NGOs. These are applicable to all aspects of the effort to reduce the supply of and demand for drugs.

8. The holistic approach is one in which the needs of the person or community are viewed as a totality. It recognizes the interaction and relationship between the various elements of the person, culture and community, and requires responses which take these into account.

9. It follows from this that responses must be multidisciplinary. No single approach, agency or profession can or should have a monopoly of expertise or action in efforts to tackle the supply of and demand for drugs.

10. To facilitate effective action, it is essential that the actions adopted at any level be integrated into an overall programme and that they encourage and promote participation, whether through individual involvement, community action and self-help or through partnership and co-operation between organizations and agencies.

11. A key factor running through production to drug use is the breakdown of social systems. This may occur in countries and communities where cultural and economic systems have been disrupted or distorted, where rapid urbanization has undermined traditional social structures, in situations where economic and environmental changes have created stress or where emphasis on material values has supplanted human values.

12. Prevention in its various manifestations is a corner-stone of activities designed to limit the supply of and demand for drugs. In education, training and treatment, the spectrum of substance abuse has to be taken into account - from tobacco and alcohol through licit drugs and solvents to illicit drugs. Drug abuse is not confined to substances controlled by conventions. Prevention involves not just the effort to reduce the likelihood that drug abuse will occur. It also is concerned with reducing the risks to the individual and community which may arise from drug abuse and in seeking and promoting ways of limiting harm in the process of containing and controlling the supply of and demand for drugs.

13. To implement achievable and, therefore, effective goals in supply and demand reduction, research has an essential role to play. Three elements are crucial if research findings are to be utilized to the fullest. The research should be

comparative, culturally appropriate, and have a multiple approach, that is, it should be designed to integrate insights from a variety of disciplines.

14. Clear-cut proposals emerged from the discussion of these themes in addition to those agreed at the Stockholm conference. They are described below.

III. RESEARCH

15. Research on drug production, trade and use should (a) be multidisciplinary in approach; (b) make use of both intensive and extensive methodologies; (c) aim at the achievement of comparative insights; and (d) be insulated from the fashionable prejudices and political pressures of the moment.

16. Specialized NGOs have a valuable role in the organization and implementation of the research agenda, while mass-membership NGOs have a vital role in facilitating the transmission of the results of research to policy makers and the public. Both basic and applied research are essential to any coherent programme for dealing with the problem of illicit narcotic and psychotropic substances.

IV. PREVENTION

17. A comprehensive prevention programme is required which gives consideration to the individual and to the dimensions of human reality: spiritual, emotional, intellectual, social, cultural and physical.

18. Special attention should be given to the spiritual dimension and the re-establishment of values. For each person, these serve as a solid foundation for personal growth and acceptance of responsibility, a sense of purpose in life and positive attitudes which sustain healthy personal, family and community relationships.

19. Faced with the complexities of drug abuse, the family should be especially identified as a natural resource for the promotion and implementation of comprehensive preventive activities, as well as a social unit at risk of splintering or disintegrating. To maximize the potential of the family, investigation into the problems and needs of the family should be undertaken and should be included by the United Nations in considering major action on behalf of the family.

20. Certain groups are at particular risk to the menace of drug abuse. Among these are street children, disaffected youth, prisoners, military personnel, the disabled and refugees, as well as people in undue stress, isolation and unhealthy environments. In addition to the high-risk groups, assessment of the degree of risk of drug abuse should be undertaken so that appropriate preventive strategies can be developed, planned and executed.

V. REDUCING RISKS AND LIMITING HARM

21. All strategies to reduce the supply and demand for drugs should include components which enable risk groups, among others, to overcome their problems and their vulnerability. They must strengthen their sense of self-worth and responsibility.
22. In comprehensive preventive actions, all members of the community should be involved at the outset in identifying areas of need and the planning and implementation of programmes intended to enhance community awareness of drug abuse issues. Within communities, in addition to using resources such as established institutions, schools and religious institutions, the positive force of peer groups such as youth-to-youth, parent-to-parent and self-support groups must be mobilized in order to effect real and sustained prevention.
23. Young people themselves are a most valuable resource. They should be engaged as active partners in programmes of drug prevention, not only aimed at youth but also undertaken by youth. The success of these programmes in the future depends on the promotion of the responsibility of youth and their sense of self-worth in contributing to the future of society.
24. Drug abuse involves many drugs, including pharmaceutical preparations. Preventive action requires the promotion of the rational use of drugs. For this to be achieved, the concept of informed consent should be promoted. Consumers and patients must be given clear information about drugs they are using and must know the purposes of the drugs and their side-effects in order to enable them to take responsible action with regard to their use.
25. The strong influence of parents as role models on the future lives of their children should be emphasized. Both parents, particularly women as the first educators of children, must be supported in order to fulfil effectively their roles in nurturing a healthy family environment. In facing drug abuse problems, continuous family education and consultation for and among the family is essential. The powerful influence of setting examples, whether in the family or in society at large, should be recognized as a means of enabling individuals to deal with crises and life situations.
26. Where drug abuse does occur, treatment and rehabilitation must be available. The goal is reintegration of the healthy individual into society. In this process, a primary task is to limit the harm arising from drug abuse. To achieve this, treatment, rehabilitation and after-care must be available at the time of need. Resources, both financial and material, must be available to support demand-reduction programmes. Should supply-reduction programmes ever have an impact on consumption patterns, there will be a shortage of treatment and rehabilitation services of crisis proportions.

VI. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

27. Manpower development must be a high priority for the NGO community and for national and local Governments.
28. Education on the negative effects of drug use and abuse, from the point of view of both the health and the economic aspects, should be carried out in schools.
29. Accurate, objective information material on the use and abuse of both licit and illicit drugs should be developed for public distribution. Culturally acceptable educational materials such as posters, films, slides, tapes, theatre to be used in schools, community meetings, clubs and other formal and informal social settings should be designed, tested and evaluated.
30. Medical, pharmacy and nursing schools should extend their curriculum to include adequate teaching on substance abuse and related health complications as well as their management.
31. Specialized skills training should be instituted for various professional and paraprofessional groups, e.g. teachers, health educators, general practitioners, primary health care workers, pharmacists, nurses, social workers, community workers and researchers. Such courses should be incorporated into overall development programmes.
32. Updated information for the range of professionals and paraprofessionals should be made available on a regular basis, to inform and improve their practices.

VII. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

33. It is evident that it is often difficult to obtain information on drug abuse and related matters. Therefore, there is an urgent need to improve the existing information system(s) in order to facilitate rapid and up-to-date data dissemination on all aspects of drug demand and supply-reduction activities.
34. The present system of literature distribution of the United Nations and its specialized agencies should be reviewed and revised to enable interested NGOs to have easy and regular access to the material published by these agencies.
35. A central information data bank, accessible to NGOs, and including data obtained from the United Nations, governmental and non-governmental organizations, should be established. The need for such a data bank is of particular importance in the area of development projects (crop substitution and related issues) but is likewise needed for other drug-related matters, whether in the field of demand or of supply reduction.
36. Information about access to funding agencies is another key issue. A distinction has to be made between national, regional and international funding possibilities. United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations

Industrial Development Organization, as well as certain national development agencies may finance - totally or partially - projects which are in line with their respective policies. There also is a need to mobilize private funding sources, especially at the national level.

37. The establishment of a networking system would facilitate communication among NGOs at all levels. This system would enable NGOs on local, national, regional and international levels to co-operate and share knowledge of ongoing programmes in which they might work together. Such a networking system would also help in avoiding duplication in programme planning and implementation. Moreover, the system would provide easy access to the utilization of expertise.

38. The use of mass media on the national and local levels is an important means of communication. NGOs can and should have an influence on the mass media, using the media to disseminate accurate, objective information on all aspects of the drug problem.

VIII. RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND ALTERNATIVE INCOME SOURCES IN SUPPLY REDUCTION

39. Development represents the only long-term hope for the large-scale reduction of organic drug supply. Development approaches to supply control have proved both the most humane and the most effective strategies in fighting illicit narcotics production at its source. Small expenditures have yielded major successes in Thailand, Turkey and Pakistan; programmes in these countries provide valuable lessons for the implementation of successful income substitution programmes. It should be noted, however, that a certain level of political and social stability is essential to the implementation of such programmes with any hope for success. Given that political and social unrest, civil disorder and warfare favour the production of drug crops, the United Nations and its Member States should seek to bring about the peaceful resolution of conflicts in major drug-producing areas.

40. Given the efficiency of income substitution programmes, NGOs should call upon Governments (after the example of Italy) to expand significantly their financial support for crop and income substitution programmes. Opportunities should also be expanded for smaller countries and NGOs to contribute to the work of international agencies in these areas both financially and in kind and in services.

41. It is also clear that any programme must be tailored to the cultural and environmental conditions in the local region of implementation. To be successful, any programme must be predicated on the uncoerced participation of farmers and the integration of local people in the decision-making and evaluation processes. To this end, all programmes should have a realistic timetable of goals, which should be reassessed as the project proceeds. These should be developed in concert with local villages so that a sense of contract is felt on both sides. Income or crop substitution is not appropriate in regions of non-traditional, intrusive criminal cultivation (e.g., cannabis cultivation in north-eastern Thailand).

42. In the light of the Stockholm Conference recommendations, it is essential to

note the importance of secure land tenure for traditional farmers if they are to be induced to abandon drug crops for longer-term investment crops (e.g. coffee), which often requires three to four years to produce.

43. In the introduction of such crops, special attention must be directed to the development of infrastructure and market access, which will allow the benefits of the programmes to continue after their completion.

44. NGOs have a responsibility to monitor the fairness and effectiveness of supply-reduction programmes. They also have the expertise to play major roles in the implementation of such programmes, as well as to undertake mobilization efforts in support of them. Any programmes which reject the stigmatization and criminalization of the traditional farmer will reduce rural alienation and, thereby, strengthen the rule of law essential to the eventual elimination of large-scale drug production.

IX. FUTURE ACTIVITIES OF NGOS

45. The Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Outline (CMO) adopted by the Conference suggests actions to be taken at regional, national and international levels. NGOs are active and involved at all these levels. It is not, therefore, solely the concern of national Governments and governmental organizations that these suggested actions should be considered and acted upon. At all levels of NGO activity it is necessary to promote and press for critical and effective responses to the CMO. Where appropriate, NGOs should take the lead in initiating actions within the CMO.

46. The NGO Committees on Narcotics and Substance Abuse in Vienna and New York provide focal points for representing the concern and needs of NGOs to the United Nations drug agencies, especially to the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the United Nations Division of Narcotic Drugs. Through them, the experience of NGOs can and should be an effective influence on decisions taken by these United Nations agencies and a means of disseminating information about the work of governmental and international organizations. The NGO Committees will seek to reinforce their existing structures to encourage, promote and expand the participation of NGOs at all levels, in the efforts to limit the supply of and reduce the demand for drugs.

47. The Stockholm NGO Conference and the Vienna Forum have promoted an informal network across countries and regions. This network must be sustained. As a first step, the list of participants present at the Forum will provide a world-wide contact list. A goal for the NGOs will be the preparation and distribution of an NGO directory.

48. The informal networks of organizations and individuals which have developed should operate through national and regional groupings of NGOs. The exchange of people across countries and regions should be encouraged and financially supported as a means of increasing knowledge, sharing experience and providing further training.

49. The NGOs have shown their commitment to and involvement with all aspects of supply and demand reduction programmes. The recognition of their important roles must become an accepted element in the considerations of national Governments and governmental organizations. Financial and material support for their work is one part of this recognition. NGOs must be engaged at the outset in the planning, development and implementation of actions in the drug abuse field at all levels.
