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STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

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Mr. Chairperson, Your Excellencies Ministers, Madam Executive-Director, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to have been invited at this podium and am very pleased to represent the civil society community on this occasion. The history of the Commission dates back 30 years: what has changed 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 meant a profound appreciation of the emerging international crime threats requesting international cooperation as the most effective and holistic response thereto. Thus, a transition from the lead of a Committee of individual experts to the governance by a Commission of governments. Indeed, the GA resolution on the creation of the Commission of 1991 - A/RES/46/152 – 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, the States took on themselves the responsibility and accountability for the 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 future.

Thank you.