

THE 10TH INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (IFNGO) CONFERENCE

THE SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR, 14 NOVEMBER 1988

Dr. James Chien, President of IFNGO; The Honourable Dato' Megat Junid, President of PEMADAM; Honourable Ministers; Excellencies; Distinguished Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to be invited to address this distinguished gathering of Non-Governmental Organisations. The honour is even greater for Malaysia to have been selected to host the 10th Conference. To all foreign speakers invited to present papers at this Conference and to all foreign participants, I extend a warm welcome to Malaysia. I sincerely hope that your stay in this country will be a memorable one and that you will take back with you happy memories of Malaysia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2. In 1979, 10 countries came together in Jakarta at the International Conference On The Role Of NGOs in Drug Abuse Prevention and Control. For 5 days, they deliberated on the roles that NGOs could play in prevention education, law enforcement, treatment and rehabilitation, and fostering regional and international cooperation. The resulting document of deliberation was one of the earliest guide for NGOs to undertake drug abuse prevention activities. The conference was to lead to the birth of the Federation of NGOs formed to show the commitment of participating countries to continue highlighting the role that NGOs could be called on to play in drug abuse prevention and control. This Federation has been recognised not only by the respective participating countries, but also by the Colombo Plan Bureau whose financial and material assistance contributed to its continued existence. I wish to record our sincere appreciation to those who have tirelessly kept the flame of the NGO movement alive and hopefully will continue to do so in the future.

3. The 1980's will be well remembered as a decade that focussed upon the social ills befalling mankind. There was and still is the hunger problem in some developing nations, pestilence and calamities in others. But the greatest scourge is drug abuse, which has brought about unprecedented levels of addiction, corruption, economic destabilisation and finally acts of terrorism. There was thus an urgent need to intensify governmental, intergovernmental, non-governmental and individual efforts to curb the supply of and demand for illicit drugs. This was manifested in the historic International Conference On Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking or ICDAIT convened in Vienna under the auspices of the United Nations. Leaders from 138 countries came together to pledge the political commitment required to confront the drug menace.

4. ICDAIT provided more than just the political will. The participants debated and approved a Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Outline of Future Activities in Drug Abuse Control, commonly referred to as the CMO. This document is a

compendium of recommendations on future directions and activities to be undertaken by states and international agencies in their efforts to combat the drug problem. It was recognised that emphasis for future action should focus on prevention efforts, especially in the field of preventive education and community action.

5. These prevention efforts are to be undertaken through schools and in the workplaces, by civic, community and special interest groups and by the media. This document also contained proposals formulated at the Stockholm Conference of NGOs in September 1986. It thus officially designated a role for the NGOs. It is this document that should now provide the NGOs their guiding light in undertaking future activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. The theme for this Conference -- ' From Global Commitment To Community Action' -- is most appropriate. The stage is now set for you to translate the Global Commitment made at ICDAIT into plans of actions. Decisions, resolutions and recommendations have followed your past deliberations. To what extent and with what degree of success have these decisions, resolutions and recommendations been implemented, remain vital questions. Accordingly this meeting, your 10th, should provide the opportunity to evaluate your past performances, determine the lacunae and overcome the shortcomings in your approaches to ensure optimal integrated action between NGOs, which must be carried out in concert with national interests and within the framework of governmental programmes. Only through the implementation of the CMO at the community level would positive results be achieved to eradicate drug abuse and trafficking.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. NGOs represent groupings of people who voluntarily get together to provide a service to meet a specific need or to tackle a specific problem. This service is established without any external force or compulsion. NGOs provide opportunities for teamwork, for the achievement of a common goal. NGOs can systematically create awareness among the people about their responsibilities and obligations, particularly in overcoming specific social problems. Indeed the role and functions of NGOs in combating social problems need no emphasis. They are institutions which can make positive contributions in initiating and improving services at the community and grass root level. They also act as training grounds for the growth and development of leadership qualities and are storehouses of social power. In short NGOs are the symbols of social consciousness, expression of people' s participation in the process of development and change, and the instruments of community intervention against social problems. The full involvement of concerned NGOs as well as the mobilisation of community resources in programmes of drug abuse prevention has great potential. NGOs should form a united front against this social evil.

8. Your meeting and deliberations over the next few days will provide more than just an opportunity for you to expand your knowledge on efforts to eradicate drug

abuse. The programme has been so structured as to enable you to discuss and formulate a set of plans to be implemented on your return to your respective countries. Thus it is imperative from the onset that you evolve your thoughts towards this goal. In this regard, I am happy that the topics that have been identified for your deliberations will enable you to achieve this objective. To my mind the topics to be discussed at this Conference are sufficiently comprehensive to enable you to formulate appropriate plans to improve on programme delivery to the community. NGOs need to be sufficiently professional in undertaking their tasks and responsibilities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. Allow me to also share some thoughts with you for consideration in your deliberations. The theme of this Conference emphasises primary prevention of drug abuse at the community level. To this end, two specific areas are being highlighted. They are the role of religion and parents, and the improvement of management skills of NGOs. Both these areas merit attention as long term strategies towards eradicating drug abuse. The community and the family represent the last frontiers in safeguarding our survival as social and human beings. To this extent they need to be further strengthened by reorienting and reeducating them to their changing roles and functions in conformity with the changing demands of our society. Strong religious and moral values, enhanced by a sound family background could ensure freedom from drug abuse for the youth of tomorrow. You have to identify strategies on how well religion and parents could be best used to fight drug abuse amongst our adolescents.

10. Intrinsic to any successful implementation of well intentioned programmes is co-operation. NGOs need to cooperate at all levels to ensure that the problem of drug abuse and trafficking is effectively tackled. The responsibility of undertaking drug abuse prevention programmes in the community is not the sole monopoly of any individual NGO. For effective community intervention against drug abuse, a participatory approach needs to be acquired. For greater effectiveness, it should be more people-oriented rather than just service-oriented. The participatory approach allows the growth of local leadership, community consciousness and revival of social controls that will deter the spread of drug addiction. Plans formulated to combat the drug problem will be more implementable as they will be based on local needs, problems and resources. Finally implementation of plans will be smooth and speedy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. I am confident that you will strive to make this 10th Conference a truly memorable one. You have with you some of the best resource persons who could provide considerable assistance in the attainment of the desired objectives. We in the Government will continue to support NGOs, whose laudable efforts are seen as complementing and supplementing those of the Government. It is my sincere hope that you who represent the NGOs in your own countries will be able to derive benefits from your attendance at this Conference and that you will contribute your efforts to your own programmes, your country' s

programmes as well as the overall programmes of international community.

12. With this hope, it is my pleasure to declare this 10th International Conference of the IFNGO open. Thank you.