Inaugural Speech

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Good day to all present:

It is an honour for me to welcome you all to the Fourth International Conference of the International Juvenile Justice Observatory which will take place over the next two days under the title of “Development of juvenile justice systems of integration: Approaches and methodologies regarding mental disorders and drug abuse”.

Firstly I would like to thank the people who are joining me at this table: MR. ROBERTO SALVAN General Director of the Italian Committee of UNICEF and DR. BRUNO BRATTOLI Head of the Department of Juvenile Justice of the Ministry of Justice of Italy who will subsequently inaugurate the conference.

Additionally, I want to express my deepest gratitude to the INSTITUTO DON CALABRIA, an Italian NGO which together with the IJJO has organised this conference and without whose help it wouldn’t have been possible to make it a reality. The INSTITUTO DON CALABRIA, has among its principal objectives the contribution to the improvement of the situation of minors and young people who find themselves in circumstances of exceptional vulnerability or social exclusion. The INSTITUTO DON CALABRIA is one of the leading experts in the field of protection of minors and juvenile justice, just as its Director, DR. ALESSANDRO PADOVANI, Honorary Judge of Minors, companion and friend, to whom I want to especially thank for all his efforts since 2008 after the Third International Conference of the IJJO when it was decided that Italy would be the host country of the current International Conference. To Alessandro and all his team, thank you very much.

Also I want to thank the group of entities and institutions that have collaborated closely in the organisation of the Fourth International Conference of the IJJO, especially MINISTRO DELLA GIOVENTÚ DEL GOVERNO ITALIANO, the DIPARTIMENTO PER LA GIUSTIZIA MINORILE DEL MINISTERO DELLA GIUSTIZIA DE ITALIA, the COMUNE DI ROMA, and the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION DIAGRAMA. Many thanks to all.
The **INTERNATIONAL JUVENILE JUSTICE OBSERVATORY** began its activity in 2003, as a consequence of rising awareness of the diversity and existing differences in the world with respect to the reality, the situation and the treatment of minors and young people in conflict with the law.

Under the defending slogan of a **JUVENILE JUSTICE WITHOUT FRONTIERS** the IJJO set itself up as a space for the promotion and collaboration of professionals, expert institutions etc., to favour the international development of policies, programmes, investigations and resources, aimed towards preventative, sanctionary and educational action that would lead to an efficient integration of minors and young people in conflict with the law. All of it in line within the framework of international adopted norms and standards on the topic the United Nations, taking as a benchmarking the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In this sense, since the International Juvenile Justice Observatory confidence has been placed in the study and analysis of the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency and the evolution of juvenile justice from a **global perspective**, taking into account the plurality of systems, resources and socio-political circumstances that exist in the world. I would also like to stress that the IJJO works with the aim of promoting the need of cooperation and collaboration that must exist between all the agents and professionals involved in the re-educative process of a minor, this being one of the main challenges.

Since the closing ceremony of the Third International Conference of the International Juvenile Justice Observatory, celebrated in Valencia (Spain) in 2008, many steps have been taken by the Observatory in accordance with its objectives. In this way the IJJO has been developing its activity in agreement with the five fundamental cores of action: **information, awareness, education, collaboration on web** and **research**.
With respect to the first theme, that of information, the IJJO through its web page forms an informative reference at an international level on the subject matter of juvenile justice, thanks to a data base that already includes more than 25,300 documents in the three official languages of the IJJO (English, French and Spanish). Soon the new IJJO webpage will be available, which through a new format, hopes to render a better service to all the actors in the sphere of juvenile justice.

In the field of awareness and on the framework of the twentieth anniversary of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, last year in 2009 the IJJO launched an international campaign “Two decades of Juvenile Justice: advances since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child” in which it had the honour of the participation of important personalities and international experts on the subject. Also echoing the established priorities of the Social Agenda of the European Union and during the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010, the IJJO has promoted the campaign “2010. Paths of integration of children in conflict with the law”.

Being conscious of the relevance of the specialised education of professionals that work in the sphere of juvenile justice, the IJJO continues to operate in this direction through the organisation and participation in congresses, seminars, conferences, etc... and especially through the biannual celebration of the IJJO International Conference whose fourth edition we celebrate today in this magnificent city. As a main training tool, The IJJO has formed the International School for Juvenile Justice (ISJJ). At the moment the school has only been active for one year, learning to develop its objective of transmitting knowledge about the different aspects that touch on juvenile justice to the biggest number of professionals.

Paying attention to another of the fundamental bases of action, the promotion of collaboration and cooperation between different actors tied to juvenile justice, the IJJO has continued promoting the development of a wide network of experts, collaborators and
users at a world level who principally come from the sphere of public administrations, international organisations, educational and academic centres and NGOs. Currently 10,000 people, between users and collaborators, from all over the world are linked to the IJJO.

In the area of investigation, the IJJO participates and coordinates different projects of investigation at a European level, emphasising in 2009/10 the Study of specific juvenile justice indicators for Europe. This study promoted by the IJJO, represents a comparative tool of reference that aspires to be put into practice for the evaluation and application of international standards in European systems of juvenile justice.

I would also like to emphasise that throughout the period of 2008/10, and with the objective of promoting the creation of continental spaces of reflection on juvenile justice, the IJJO has created the European Juvenile Justice Observatory (EJJO) whose headquarters is in Brussels (Belgium), as well as the Latin American Juvenile Justice Observatory (LJJO) and the African Juvenile Justice Observatory (AJJO) whose headquarters are in Panama and Kenya respectively.

In relation to the EJJO, it must be pointed out that it is in the process of setting up the European Council of Juvenile Justice as a central organ of work and reflection of the EJJO. Among its different activities, the European Council of Juvenile Justice has the task of the development of proposals and recommendation relative to the needs and evolution of juvenile justice in Europe, fundamentally in the areas of prevention, intervention, and reintegration of children and young people in conflict with the law. These recommendations hope to give rise to a group of norms and common orientations at a European level that will be transferred to international organisms and European authorities competent in the subject.
81 experts and professionals coming from the sphere of public state administrations which are competent in juvenile justice, universities and academic centres and NGOs from every one of the EU Member States, form part of the above Council.

With the goal of promoting the progress reached in regard to the formation of the European Council of Juvenile Justice, in the context of the Fourth International Conference, the Second Meeting will take place on the 11\textsuperscript{th} of November 2010. At this meeting the object of discussion will be the most relevant themes and preoccupations clarified by the participants during the First Meeting in 2009. The conclusions reached in the same meeting will be presented before the competent European institutions and more concretely before the European Commission, through the development of three Green Papers on the following themes: \textit{The implementation of international standards in the European Juvenile Justice systems; \textit{Needs and lacks of European standards adapted to the reality and status of juvenile justice systems in the European Union and \textit{The social reintegration of young offenders as a key factor for combating recidivism.}}

An example of collaboration and compromise through their actions in the European scene, I would like to emphasise that the EJJO and the IJJO have participated in the process of elaboration of the \textit{“Guidelines of the Committe of Ministers of the Council of Europe on Child-Friendly Justice”}, that will be adopted by the Committee of Ministers on the European Council at its meeting that takes place this week.

The \textbf{INTERNATIONAL JUVENILE JUSTICE OBSERVATORY} has experienced notable advances in its different lines of work even if many challenges and new hills to climb are left in its intention to improve juvenile justice for all, and consequently, the situation of everyone of our children in conflict with the law.
A commitment that must be reaffirmed in present times in which, in view of the world economic crisis that affects us, we must continue to work so that socio-economic circumstances do not especially impact on the groups that need the biggest protection such as, for example, children and young people, especially those who are in conflict with the law.

Facing a restrictive positioning of resources or a larger sanctionary charge in view of anti-social conduct, possible consequences of the complex economic situation in which we live, we must transmit “a message of hope for all the children and young offenders, given that they are still young, full of possibility and a future in liberty” as I have already declared on other occasions.

In this sense, systems of juvenile justice must combine sanctionary-educational action with the generation of possibilities of real labour and social reintegration, that constitute an opportunity for the integral development of young offenders.

Together with this educational and reintegrational conception of the systems of juvenile justice, I would like to emphasis the need that children immersed in judicial proceeding in whatever country of the world, can also count on the necessary free legal assistance that permits them to be able to be participants and intervene, in accordance with the law of infant participation, in each one of the phases of the process, in relation to what is set out in article 40 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. In this sense, I would like to emphasis the international campaign that was launched by the INTERNATIONAL JUVENILE JUSTICE OBSERVATORY under the title “Legal assistance for children in conflict with the law” in which the situation of legal assistance is analised in the world. A campaign that all of you can visit on the web page of the IJJO.

I would also like to make a reference to our firm determination to contribute to its work in respect to action aimed at the abolition of the death penalty throughout the world,
seeing this as the most extreme denial of human rights. To collaborating with all those who work for the suspension of executions on the suppositions in international law that restrain its application, as in the cases of minors. Working all the time for the definition of penal systems that in no case violate the right to life and the right to not be submitted to cruel punishment. As 1986 Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel claims “to know but not to act is a form of consent to injustice. The planet is very small, what happens in other countries affects us.”

The IJJO International Conference, that takes place biannually and whose Fourth edition we celebrate at present in Rome under the title: “Development of juvenile justice systems of integration: Approaches and methodologies regarding mental disorders and drug abuse”, in the context of action in regard to formation and investigation of the International Juvenile Justice Observatory and links experts and professionals coming from different continents with the goal of working, debating and studying from a multidisciplinary point of view, the problems and challenges that are raised in the sphere of juvenile justice.

I have to emphasise that in all the previous conferences, Salamanca (Spain), Brussels (Belgium) and Valencia (Spain) a deep worry was expressed about the situation and treatment received by children and young offenders that suffered some type of mental disorder or problems related to drugs misuse.

Thus, in the present edition, the International Conference is taking as a central theme the need to articulate programmes and resources that allows effective intervention with children and young people who suffer mental health problems and/or the substances misuse are also at risk and/or in conflict with the law. In this way the development and promotion of systems of integrational juvenile justice is considered primordial and the narrow coordination and collaboration between justice, health and the socio-educational field.
This conference hopes to be a multidisciplinary meeting space between different related areas (juridical, police, social, sanitary, therapeutic, pedagogical, etc…) with the objective of reflecting and debating on the different factors that must be analysed from a social, familial, physiological perspective etc.- being aware that in the course of these two days more questions will be raised than answered, since the theme undertaken is complex and will not permit us to give definite solutions. We, like young people, also immersed in a process of searching in which we are going about finding answers, that are on many occasions, provisional.

The Conference has as an objective to also study the different systems of treatment of these children and young people according to available resources in systems of juvenile justice, health, social services, etc… All of it in the context of the international regulations on the matter that, as a common denominator, puts special emphasis on the need to establish of channels of intervention that are adapted to the situation of these children.

The relevance of this subject matter in the study is shown in the conclusions and results of the investigations carried out at an international level and that coincide in stressing the high percentage of children and young offenders that suffer some mental disorder or some addiction to narcotic substances.

Few professionals of mental health question the scientific findings of the last years, that have come from genetics or neuroscience, they are going to transform present knowledge of mental illness. Recently the last “Journal of American Medical Association” coincided in pointing out that it was the moment to revaluate mental disorders, their causes and possible treatments. The President of the “Asociación Española de Psiquiatría del Niño y el Adolescente” also said that illnesses of the mind, that before were natural, will come to be illness of the mind. And if we take into account that 70% of mental disorders of adults start in childhood, the search for new focuses in the understanding of mental
disorders is really exciting and without a doubt it will have consequences in prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

In this form, the employment of methods and tools of diagnosis, detection and evaluation must be considered very relevant in the process of intervention with these children. Equally, it is really important that those children and young people whose behaviour derives from different levels of mental illness, who are situated in the middle a penal process, find different professional that assist them, not as free electrons, but as truly involved teams, in narrow collaboration and from a multiagency perspective.

I would also like to point out that at the heart of the Fourth International Conference, the IJJO will share with assistants and participants the results obtained until now in the carrying out of a investigatory project “European Comparative Analysis and the Transfer of Knowledge on Mental Health Resources for Young Offenders” coordinated by the IJJO in the framework of the DAPHNE Programme III of the European Commission. The project has as its ultimate objective the development of good practices and educational programmes which are adapted to the needs of professionals and children, from an integrational and multidisciplinary perspective of systems of justice and health.

In the same manner, the final results obtained from the investigatory project “Juvenile Delinquency related to drugs DREJC” which was financed by the European Commision and coordinated by the Italian organisation INSTITUTO DON CALABRIA, and in which this Observatory is also participating, whose objective is to stimulate, promote and develop multidisciplinary methods in order to strategically prevent juvenile delinquency linked to drug use and consumption, will be put forward.

I am convinced that the results of these two investigatory projects, the contents of the plenary sessions and workshops, together with the extensive experience of the participants will serve as a base for working together during the next two days under the
objective: analysing in depth how the juvenile justice system can give an efficient response to the needs of children and young people with problem with mental health or drug abuse through coordinated and integrational action, identifying the means to guarantee successful cooperation in order to assure their social and professional reintegration.

We must stress that our pharmaceutical treatments are always necessary from a clinical point of view but are never an instrument of control. Likewise, our therapies must be efficient and guided by trained professionals specialised in the area of psychotherapy. And always make children and young people the centre of our work.

The conclusions and results obtained during the course of the International Conference will without a doubt be very valuable when improving our professional dedication to boys, girls, and young people so that they may be free and responsible adults and focus on their future with joy and hope. These conclusions are expressed in a Joint Declaration with the goal of being a means through which one can appear before European and international institutions for the promotion of political, legislative, sanitary and medical, social responses etc... in accordance with the necessities of intervention with these minors.

Finally I would like to announce that this evening, in this very room, the presentation ceremony of the International Award of Juvenile Justice without Frontiers, created by the International Juvenile Justice Observatory with the goal of recognising the work of institutions, experts and personalities that show a firm commitment to the defence of the rights of children and in favour of systems of juvenile justice that promote the integrational development of boys, girls and young people in conflict with the law.

Finally I have to thank all of you for your assistance, encourage you to participate actively in the course of the plenary sessions and workshops so that, between us all, we can
reach results that have a positive bearing on the improvement of the situation of children
and young people who display problem with mental health and/or substances misuse and
who in turn find themselves at risk and/or in conflict with the law, in such a way that, in a
joint manner, we construct integrational systems of juvenile justice.

And to finish, to show that in no case must we criminalise our children or young
people with problems with mental, in the same way we must no pathologize our children or
young offenders.

Many thanks.