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## **SENATOR GEORGE BORRELLO ADDRESSES 5<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL CONFERENCE FOR A DRUG-FREE WORLD**

*Forum focused on the challenges of drug abuse and its role in driving other societal problems*



*Following his address to conference members, Senator Borrello was presented with the Ambassador of Peace Award for his efforts. From left to right: County Executive P.J. Wendel; Ali Gedikoglu, president of COJEP International; Dr. Bernard Fialkoff, president of the Americas Chapter of a Drug-Free World; Senator George Borrello and Ambassador Hugues Sanon, Special Envoy for International Relations for COJEP International and the Global Ambassador of the Foundation for a Drug-Free World.*

**NEW YORK** – Senator George Borrello addressed the challenges presented by drug abuse at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual United Nations Global Conference for a Drug-Free World held on Friday, March 22 at U.N. Headquarters in New York. The forum was part of the 68th annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68), the UN's largest annual gathering on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Senator Borrello participated in the special event at the invitation of Ambassador Hugues Sanon, the Special Envoy for International Relations of the Council for Justice, Equality and Peace (COJEP International) to the United Nations and the Global Ambassador of the Foundation for a Drug-Free World. Also representing the region at the forum was Chautauqua County Executive P.J. Wendel. They joined a slate of national and international figures from the fields of research, medicine, human services, and advocacy.

Ambassador Sanon served as the event coordinator and the co-moderator for the Conference alongside Dr. Bernard Fialkoff, the founder and president of the Americas Chapter of the Foundation for a Drug-Free World.

In addressing the conference participants, Senator Borrello underscored the fact that no community or group is immune from the ravages of drug abuse.

“The 57<sup>th</sup> Senate District is one of the most rural areas in New York State. I represent five counties in Western New York and more than 4,000 farms. We have many small communities. And yet, drug abuse has impacted every community I represent,” said Senator Borrello. “This is not an urban problem. This is not a poverty problem. This permeates *every* demographic. That is our challenge.”

Senator Borrello noted that while New York State allocates significant funding for drug prevention and treatment programs, it undermines those goals through increasingly lax state laws. He cited criminal justice laws that “release drug dealers onto the streets over and over again to poison our children” and the misguided legalization of marijuana which has spurred the proliferation of illegal marijuana shops.

“As someone who has witnessed the devastating impact of drug abuse firsthand through my work as an Emergency Medical Technician since 1995, combating drug abuse isn't just a policy agenda for me—it's personal. Chautauqua County, like many regions across the United States, grapples with the challenges of drug abuse, exacerbated by our strategic location between major metropolitan areas. This reality has prompted urgent action, leading to our designation as a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area in 2014,” said **Paul M. Wendel Jr. Chautauqua County Executive**. “Our commitment to addressing drug abuse is unwavering.”

“I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Senator George Borrello for his tireless advocacy in addressing the scourge of drug abuse and for his unwavering support in our endeavors. Additionally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Ambassador Hugues Sanon for his invaluable support and guidance throughout our efforts to combat drug addiction in Chautauqua County,” said County Executive Wendel.

“I am grateful to my friend Ambassador Hugues Sanon for offering me the opportunity to attend this important global conference to listen and speak on the critical issue of drug use and abuse,” said Senator Borrello. “Ambassador Sanon’s dedication to bringing together representatives from across the globe to share information and perspectives is key to advancing better understanding as well as effective solutions.”

Following the discussion, Senator Borrello was honored with the "Ambassador of Peace Award" and the "Leadership Award" for his efforts to address the problem of drug abuse and its toll on families, communities and societies.

**Ambassador Sanon said**, “as a resident of Jamestown I’ve been grateful for the opportunity to work with leaders like Senator Borrello and County Executive Wendel on the growing problem of drug abuse and other issues that are tearing at the fabric of our communities. Together, we can mobilize the political will and resources needed to address this global problem and build solutions.”