**Speaking Notes for Minister Feighan - In memory of Fergus McCabe**

Before we begin today’s meeting, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to a former member of this Committee, the late Fergus McCabe.

While I didn’t personally know Fergus, I understand from those of you who did that Fergus was passionate about his work – he was a doer, an activist, a campaigner, a mentor and a friend to many. He empowered and helped people and communities to find their voice.

Fergus was a veteran community and drugs campaigner for many years.  He represented the community sector on the various monitoring structures of the national drug strategy over the years, from the National Drugs Strategy team, to the Oversight Forum on Drugs and more recently on this Committee.  His contribution to the development of the current strategy, *Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery*, is hugely valued.

Fergus was a very effective communicator in his dealings with Governments Departments over the years.  He demonstrated a keen understanding of the Department’s point of view whilst at the same time, championing the needs of vulnerable people and adhering to the principles of social justice and a person-centred approach to service delivery. His courteous nature and steely determination helped to resolve many complex issues.

I would like to extend condolences to his wife, Helena, their children and grandchildren and to his many colleagues and friends.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.