



VIENNA NGO COMMITTEE ON DRUGS (VNGOC)

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Revised and Adopted in September 2017

1. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

1. The Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs (VNGOC) Rules of Procedure are designed to supplement and sit alongside the VNGOC Statutes, and to provide greater clarity and detail on how the VNGOC manages various decision-making processes.
2. The procedures and conduct of the VNGOC and its member organizations shall be undertaken in accordance with the VNGOC Statutes and the VNGOC Rules of Procedures – both of which are approved and adopted by the General Assembly.

2. DEFINITIONS

1. The **General Assembly** is the “Mitgliederversammlung” as specified in the Austrian 202 Associations Act (Vereinsgesetz), and is open to all member organizations in good standing. The Annual General Assembly will take place each year around the major annual session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), while additional General Assembly meetings may be called in line with the Statutes and relevant articles below. Only resolutions and decisions passed at General Assembly meetings are valid (other than operational decisions made by the Board).
2. **Informal meetings** may be held by VNGOC during the year for information and discussion purposes only, but no decisions may be taken at these meetings.
3. The **Board** is the managing body (“Leitungsorgan”) as stipulated in the Austrian 2002 Associations Act. It is responsible for all duties not assigned to another body outlined in the VNGOC Statutes. Board Members are the six elected representatives from member organizations – specifically the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer.

4. **Member organizations** are non-governmental organisations whose application to join the VNGOC have been accepted by the Board in line with the Statutes and the relevant articles below.
5. **Member organizations in good standing** are those member organizations that have paid the appropriate membership fee (or have submitted annual membership commitment forms, where applicable) for the current year and the previous year.
6. **VNGOC staff** refers to officials appointed by the Board to help manage the day-to-day running of VNGOC, which may or may not include an Executive Director.

3. MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS

1. The eligibility criteria and conditions for membership of VNGOC are outlined in the VNGOC Statutes.
2. Applicant organizations must fully complete the official application form, and submit it by email to VNGOC. This form includes confirmation that the applicant organization is active in matters related to drug policy, strategy or practice.
3. Upon receipt of an application form, VNGOC staff will perform an initial assessment of eligibility against the criteria, and will verify that the organization has consultative status with ECOSOC or that it has a registered profile with UN DESA NGO Branch. If an application does not pass this initial assessment, the applicant organization will be informed by VNGOC staff.
4. Eligible application forms are then sent electronically to the Board for review.
5. An application form will be approved by the Board, and confirmed by the Secretary, provided there are no objections from Board Members within one week. The outcome will then be communicated to the applicant by VNGOC staff, who will send a welcome letter including the membership fee information.
6. If there are objections from Board Members, the application form will be discussed further and a decision reached by the Board.
7. In the event that an application form is rejected by the Board, this decision will be communicated to the applicant by the Secretary, who will send a rejection letter including an explanation of the reasons for the rejection.
8. Organizations whose applications have been rejected may resubmit their application form once the identified issues have been addressed, or may appeal to the General Assembly. Such appeals must be sent by email to VNGOC,

and received at least three weeks prior to the General Assembly in order to be considered. The General Assembly decision will then be deemed as final.

9. The Board shall announce new member organizations and report on denied applications at each General Assembly.

4. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

1. Any member organization that has not paid their membership fee (or has not submitted annual membership commitment forms, where applicable) for three consecutive years will be deemed to have voluntarily withdrawn their membership.
2. In this event, VNGOC staff will send at least two written reminders to the member organization. If no satisfactory response is received within one month of the final reminder, then the organization will be removed from the VNGOC membership.
3. In the event of a member organization undergoing a change of circumstances that rules them ineligible according to the membership criteria – such as the loss of legal status or independence – the Board will request the member organization to re-submit an application form or confirm their voluntarily withdrawal from the membership.
4. In this event, VNGOC staff will send at least two written reminders to the member organization. If no satisfactory response is received within one month of the final reminder, then the organization will be removed from the VNGOC membership.
5. If a member organization is deemed to be violating the membership criteria and obligations as per the VNGOC Statutes, or is deemed to have brought VNGOC into disrepute, they may be reported to the Board in writing by another member organization, or identified independently by the Board or VNGOC staff.
6. In this event, the Board will review the case and, if required, submit a formal resolution for consideration at the next General Assembly. The member organization in question shall have the right to make representations at the next General Assembly. A decision on the expulsion of a member organization shall then be made by the General Assembly by consensus or, if required, through a simple majority of the total eligible votes cast.
7. In the event of gross misconduct, the Board may suspend membership pending a decision by the General Assembly.
8. The Board shall announce any organizations who have been removed from the membership at each General Assembly.

5. MEMBERSHIP FEES AND PAYMENTS

1. Membership fees are proposed by the Board and approved by the General Assembly, and are based on the member organization's total annual revenue for the preceding year. The Board reserves the right to request the submission of a member organization's annual accounts in order to verify that the correct fee is being paid.
2. Membership fees can be paid by cash (Euros), transfer into the VNGOC Euro or US\$ accounts based in Vienna, or by PayPal. VNGOC is not responsible for any banking charges incurred by member organizations. Member organizations are requested to include the organization name and the year for which the fee is being paid in the payment reference / description.
3. All incoming membership fees are processed at the end of each month by VNGOC staff, and registered on a central database.
4. Member organizations can request an invoice or receipt for their payments by emailing VNGOC.

6. PREPARING FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLIES

1. The Board will organize an Annual General Assembly each year, in the margins of the major annual session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) – usually in March or April.
2. The Board will organize additional General Assembly meetings within twelve weeks of a formal request submitted in lines with the VNGOC Statutes.
3. The Board will notify all member organizations of the date and time of the General Assembly, by e-mail at least four weeks prior to the meeting date.
4. The Board will then send all member organizations the additional working documents for the General Assembly, by email at least one week in advance of the meeting. This includes:
 - the agenda and venue
 - relevant reports from the Board (such as on VNGOC activities and finances)
 - relevant discussion papers
 - any resolutions for decision
 - instructions on how to participate online, vote electronically, or nominate a proxy (where appropriate)
5. In order for any decisions of the General Assembly to be valid, a quorum of at least fifteen percent of member organizations in good standing must be achieved. This quorum includes those participating in person, online or via proxy. If quorum is not achieved, then the General Assembly shall be rescheduled – and all decisions postponed – until such a time when quorum can be achieved.

7. INFORMAL MEETINGS

1. The Board will host additional informal meetings during the year, for information and discussion purposes only. Member organizations will be notified of such meetings at least four weeks in advance – and sooner if possible. However, no decisions or resolutions may be passed at these meetings.

8. VOTING ON RESOLUTIONS AT GENERAL ASSEMBLIES

1. Only resolutions passed and decisions made at General Assembly meetings are valid (other than operational decisions made by the Board).
2. The Board reserves the right, during a General Assembly, to ask the participants if consensus has been achieved on a decision point – at which point consensus will be assumed unless a participant specifically states otherwise and requests for a vote to take place.
3. Member organizations in good standing are entitled to cast one vote per organization in the General Assembly.
4. In the event that a member organization in good standing is unable to participate in the General Assembly in person or remotely, the organization may assign their voting rights to a representative of another member organization in good standing who will be attending in person. Such proxy assignments must be limited to the specific General Assembly in question.
5. Notice of proxy assignments must be registered on the official form that is provided, sent by email to VNGOC, and received before 23:59 (Vienna time) on the day before the General Assembly meeting. Requests for proxy assignments received after this period will not be counted. Requests for proxy assignments received in any other format will not be counted.
6. Each individual present at the General Assembly may hold no more than three proxy assignments.
7. For member organizations in good standing that are able to participate in the General Assembly in person, their vote should be registered on the official form that is provided, and submitted confidentially to VNGOC staff at the end of the relevant agenda item.
8. For member organizations in good standing that are able to participate in the General Assembly remotely (such as through Skype), their vote should be registered through private message to the VNGOC staff hosting the call, at the end of the relevant agenda item.
9. Votes on resolutions will be decided by a simple majority of the total votes cast, as counted by VNGOC staff acting as the returning officers – with the exception of votes on resolutions to remove the Board, to alter the VNGOC

Statutes, or to dissolve the VNGOC shall, which require a majority of two-thirds of the total votes cast, as counted by VNGOC staff acting as the returning officers.

9. BOARD ELECTIONS

1. Wherever possible, elections for at least three Board positions should be held at every Annual General Assembly, apart from in exceptional circumstances when they may be held during an additional General Assembly meeting. This is to ensure continuity on the Board – with the positions of Chairperson, Deputy Secretary and Deputy Treasurer being elected in one year, and the positions of Deputy Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer being elected in the another year, wherever possible.
2. The election procedures will be managed and overseen by a Nominations Committee chosen by the General Assembly in line with the VNGOC Statutes, and supported by VNGOC staff as required.
3. The Nominations Committee will release a call for nominations for the Board at least two months prior to the General Assembly, and closing one month prior to the General Assembly. This call for nominations will be sent by email to all member organizations, and posted on the VNGOC website and online platforms, and will include full details of the process.
4. Nominations will only be accepted from representatives of member organizations that are in good standing at the time the nomination is received.
5. Nominations must be seconded by another member organization that is in good standing at the time the nomination is received.
6. Nomination forms that are partially or incorrectly completed will be rejected by the Nominations Committee.
7. Nomination forms will only be accepted in English.
8. An individual candidate may be nominated for no more than two of the vacant Board positions.
9. Existing Board Members are eligible to nominate for re-election, provided the other criteria are met and they will not be exceeding the maximum of four consecutive terms. Members of the Nomination Committee may not be nominated for election onto the Board.
10. If the nominated candidate is not the Chairperson, President, Chief Executive Officer, Executive Director or equivalent of their organization, they should have the written approval of the aforementioned individual.
11. The Nominations Committee will then circulate the full list of eligible candidates and their details to all member organizations, by e-mail at least two weeks prior to the meeting date – and sooner if possible.

12. At the General Assembly, a separate vote will be taken for each of the Board positions that are vacant. In the event that only one candidate is nominated for a position, their election will be confirmed by default.
13. In the event that a member organization in good standing is unable to participate in the General Assembly in person or remotely, votes may be submitted electronically between 24 hours and 1 hours before the start of the General Assembly.
14. Electronic votes must be registered on the official form that is provided, and sent by email to VNGOC. Electronic votes received before or after this period will not be counted. Electronic votes received in any other format will not be counted.
15. In the event that a member organization in good standing is unable to participate in the General Assembly in person or remotely, the organization may alternatively assign their voting rights to a representative of another member organization in good standing who will be attending in person. Such proxy assignments must be limited in nature – i.e. be specific for certain decisions being taken at the General Assembly – rather than open-ended.
16. Such proxy assignments must be registered using the official form that is provided, sent by email to VNGOC, and received before 23:59 (Vienna time) on the day before the General Assembly meeting. Requests for proxy assignments received after this period will not be counted. Requests for proxy assignments received in any other format will not be counted.
17. For member organizations in good standing that are able to participate in the General Assembly in person, their vote should be registered on the official form that is provided, and submitted confidentially to VNGOC staff at the end of the relevant agenda item.
18. For member organizations in good standing that are able to participate in the General Assembly remotely (such as through Skype), their vote should be registered through private message to the VNGOC staff hosting the call, at the end of the relevant agenda item.
19. The elections will be decided by a simple majority of the total votes cast, as counted by VNGOC staff acting as the returning officers. The result will be confirmed during the General Assembly.

10. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SPECIFIC BOARD POSITIONS

1. The Chairperson:
 - is the highest ranking official of VNGOC;
 - is responsible for the proper functioning of the Board and VNGOC staff;
 - is responsible for ensuring adherence to the VNGOC Statutes and the VNGOC Rules of Procedure;

- is the direct line manager for the Executive Director or, in the absence of an Executive Director, for all VNGOC staff;
 - shall represent VNGOC in external matters, including with government authorities and any other entities;
 - is expected to convene, attend and preside over all Board meetings, General Assembly meetings and informal meetings in Vienna; and
 - shall maintain effective communications with current and prospective member organizations, and other NGO committees.
2. The Deputy Chairperson:
- will support the Chairperson in the implementation of his or her role;
 - shall, in the absence of the Chairperson, act on his or her behalf and perform his or her duties; and
 - is expected to travel to Vienna at least once a year for VNGOC meetings.
3. The Secretary:
- shall liaise with VNGOC staff to ensure that adequate minutes are kept from Board meetings, General Assembly meetings and informal meetings;
 - shall oversee the membership application and termination procedures;
 - shall oversee the recording of members and membership fee payments;
 - shall oversee communications with member organizations, in line with the VNGOC Rules of Procedure;
 - shall assist the Chairperson with managing ongoing business; and
 - is expected to travel to Vienna at least once a year for VNGOC meetings.
4. The Deputy Secretary:
- will support the Secretary in the implementation of his or her role;
 - shall, in the absence of the Secretary, act on his or her behalf and perform his or her duties; and
 - is expected to travel to Vienna at least once a year for VNGOC meetings.
5. The Treasurer:
- shall be responsible for properly managing and accounting for VNGOC funds;
 - shall prepare and present annual budgets and regular financial updates for the General Assembly;
 - shall liaise with VNGOC staff to ensure the maintenance of appropriate systems for book-keeping, receipts and payments, and the prompt response to financial enquiries;
 - shall be responsible for all bank accounts and disbursements by VNGOC;
 - shall liaise with VNGOC staff on the collection of membership fees and other fundraising efforts;
 - shall work with the appointed auditors to facilitate the annual audit of the VNGOC accounts; and
 - is expected to travel to Vienna at least once a year for VNGOC meetings.
6. The Deputy Treasurer:
- will support the Treasurer in the implementation of his or her role;

- shall, in the absence of the Treasurer, act on his or her behalf and perform his or her duties; and
- is expected to travel to Vienna at least once a year for VNGOC meetings.

11. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

1. The financial year for VNGOC shall be the calendar year.
2. Payments will be made from the VNGOC accounts upon receipt and approval of invoices and all relevant attachments and necessary information. VNGOC staff will be responsible for uploading payments onto the VNGOC account for processing, or requesting further information if required.
3. For individual payments up to € 5,000 (or equivalent), the invoice and documentation should be sent to the Chairperson and Treasurer for review. If no objections are raised by the Chairperson within 72 hours, the payment can be processed upon written approval by the Treasurer.
4. For individual payments over € 5,001 (or equivalent), the invoice and documentation should be sent to the Board for review. If no objections are raised by the Board within 72 hours, the payment can be processed upon written approval by the Treasurer.
5. The Treasurer is then responsible for approving the payment on the VNGOC online banking system.

12. DEVELOPING AND APPROVING STATEMENTS

1. VNGOC is commonly requested to make oral or written statements for events such as the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) meetings and other international events or processes.
2. The VNGOC Board will agree which Board Member will be the designated speaker. If no Board Member is able to participate, then the Board may represent a third party to represent VNGOC.
3. The selected individual will draft a statement, aligned to the VNGOC Strategic Plan and reflecting the balanced and broad perspectives held within the VNGOC membership.
4. The draft statement should then be shared by email with the Board for comments and suggestions, before reaching consensus on the statement through an iterative process.
5. The final statement will then be shared with member organizations by email, and uploaded to the VNGOC website after delivery.

13. SELECTING SPEAKERS / REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE MEMBERSHIP

1. VNGOC is commonly requested to identify and select civil society speakers and/or panelists (other than VNGOC itself) for events such as the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) meetings and other international events.
2. Where appropriate, the selection process will be undertaken in partnership and consultation with other NGO committees or other key stakeholders in order to increase participation and ensure the broadest possible representation.
3. As soon as practically possible, a call will be circulated to member organizations with a clear deadline to apply and, where required, an online form to capture the required information (contact details, organization, short resume, abstract of the statement to be delivered, etc). This call will also be posted on the VNGOC website and online platforms.
4. Where possible, applications for both in person and video interventions will be encouraged.
5. Board Members may apply to speak themselves, but must then recuse themselves from the subsequent decision-making processes in order to avoid conflicts of interest.
6. Once the deadline has passed, the details of applicants will be collated and circulated to the Board. Discussions can then be conducted either electronically or through calling a Board meeting.
7. The Board shall make decisions by consensus wherever possible, or by simple majority vote where required. In the event of a tie, the Chairperson shall cast the deciding vote. The final decision should, to the extent possible, ensure balanced geographical and thematic representation that reflects the VNGOC membership.
8. Once a decision has been made, VNGOC staff will contact the selected speaker(s) by email with further instructions, and will also notify all of the unsuccessful applicants. The Chairperson will contact the convener of the meeting or event to notify them of the decision made.

14. FORMULATION OF STRATEGY AND POLICY PAPERS

1. The Board will draft strategy and policy documents at the request of the General Assembly, or on their own initiative.
2. In this event, the Board will produce a draft document, which should be shared with member organizations by email. Comments will then be considered from member organizations in good standing within two weeks of the original email. The Board will make every effort to ensure that comments are addressed, while also seeking to balance differing views as much as possible and acknowledging the breadth of positions within the VNGOC membership.

3. For this purpose, the absence of a response from a member organization will be deemed to indicate consent to the document.

15. AMENDMENTS TO THE RULES OF PROCEDURE

1. A resolution to amend these Rules of Procedure must be submitted to the Board by a member organization in good standing, by email at least three weeks prior to the next General Assembly.
2. In order to take effect, a proposed amendment must be adopted by consensus or by a simple majority of the total votes cast, as counted by VNGOC staff acting as the returning officers.
3. Care must be taken when amending these Rules of Procedure that such amendments do not contradict or contravene the VNGOC Statutes. Changes to the VNGOC Statutes, if required, must be adopted by consensus or by a two-thirds majority of the total votes cast at a General Assembly, as counted by VNGOC staff acting as the returning officers.