



Annual Report of Activities 2016

Presented by the VNGOC Executive Board

Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs/
Wiener Drogen Komitee (VNGOC)
PO Box 14, Wagramerstrasse 5
A - 1400 Vienna
Austria / Europe
ZVR-Zahl 995552988

General Enquiries: info@vngoc.org

Membership enquiries: membership@vngoc.org

Web site: www.vngoc.org



Introduction: Message from the Chair

2016 was a productive year for the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs (VNGOC), one that saw our standing and meaningful contribution towards addressing the world drug problem recognised and valued.

We started off the year working hard together with our partner – [the New York NGO Committee on Drugs \(NYNGOC\)](https://www.cstfondrugs.org/) - to ensure the participation of the Civil Society Task Force (<https://www.cstfondrugs.org/>) in the preparatory process of, and during, the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on the world drug problem (April 2016).

The CSTF, a global network of 31 member organizations from nine global regions and nine affected populations/global voices, facilitated a comprehensive, structured, meaningful and balanced participation of civil society during the UNGASS process, providing grass roots organisations the opportunity to report on what is working and what can be improved in addressing the world drug problem.

The VNGOC proudly served as Secretariat to the CSTF, effectively and efficiently enabling selected speakers from grass roots organisations to attend both the Informal Interactive Civil Society Hearing (February 2016), organised by the CSTF, and the UNGASS.

Post-UNGASS, as part of the CSTF, the VNGOC launched a survey, asking civil society to provide feedback on the work of the CSTF. Though the response rate was rather low, respondents found the work of the CSTF meaningful. Suggestions on how to improve its work, as well as civil society participation in United Nations processes related to drug matters were put forward. The findings are available on the CSTF website.

The VNGOC is playing a key role in facilitating civil society participation, both in person and remotely, in the follow-up process to the UNGASS. This includes selecting grassroots NGO representatives to report on their work during the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) intersessional meetings discussing the implementation of the operational recommendations included in the UNGASS outcome document. Suggestions on speakers were also made by the NYNGOC.

The facilitator role played by the VNGOC during the UNGASS process and its aftermath would not have been possible without the excellent cooperation we have built over the years with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the CND and its Secretariat, the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), as well as other UN bodies, both in New York and Geneva. Most of all, through its member organisations and its Board, the VNGOC cooperated closely with Member States during the UNGASS process, which translated into concrete progress in effectively addressing the world drug problem.

As we look forward to the role the VNGOC can play in the implementation of the UNGASS outcome document and the 2019 review, I am confident that our work will continue to be efficient and meaningful. Partnerships are key to achieving this. Such is the case with the recent Memorandum of Understanding the VNGOC signed with UNODC, which will constitute the basis for our collaboration up until 2019.

Most importantly, the VNGOC remains committed to a respectful and constructive dialogue with Member States at all levels. It is our belief that this dialogue will go a long way in ensuring an effective implementation of international drug policy commitments in the framework of the Sustainable Development Agenda and Human Rights Law.

Bearing this in mind, I wish you a productive year ahead and look forward to working closely with you.

Esbjörn Hörnberg
Chair
Vienna NGO Committee



I. Membership Update

VNGOC membership expanded to almost 200 regular civil society organisations in good standing by early 2017. Collection of dues is still an issue, even though we have a sliding scale based on country income. The Treasurer's Report will confirm EUR 5,300. We are committed to representing the widest spectrum of civil society working with the multiple populations affected by national, regional, and global policy. Our effectiveness as an organisation depends on the extent of your participation, which includes paying dues, following the progress of the organisation, and participating as much as possible in organised activities. We also welcome proposals for new activities so that we can learn how better to collaborate. A link to the membership page can be found [here](#).

Much of the Board's time in 2016 was spent reviewing the membership criteria, approving new members, and selecting qualified representatives to speak at the CND intersessionals. We would love to see the development of a membership committee to attract and orient new members and expand participation. If you are interested in learning more, please contact us at info@vngoc.org.

II. UNGASS Preparation, Participation, and Follow up.

Civil Society Task Force: VNGOC was active at the [UN General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem](#) (UNGASS), collaborating with our sister New York NGO Committee through the Civil Society Task Force to ensure meaningful civil society participation in the event itself, and coordinating follow up activities with partners on the ground and member states. VNGOC suspended its activities during the preparatory period for UNGASS and the during the UNGASS itself, participating through the Chair and Vice Chair in the [Civil Society Task Force](#), along with NYNGOC. The VNGOC acted as Secretariat and provided the entire financial administration to the CSTF.

The Civil Society Task Force appointed for UNGASS has been inactive since the event itself, as its immediate mandate had expired. In evaluating its work, a survey was sent to over 1000 organisations connected to the CSTF during UNGASS preparations. The rate of response was 19%. Out of those who responded, 89% were satisfied with the work of the CSTF. Only 11% perceived the CSTF as unsatisfactory. The impact of the Task Force's work was seen as positive by 90% of respondents. Valuable comments leading forward were received, as well as a number of complaints about the UNGASS logistics and UN attitude towards civil society.

The CSTF Steering group therefore sent a letter to the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary General, and the President of the General Assembly, the UNGASS Board Chair and Mr. Fedotov. While the letter also focused on the positive aspects of UNGASS, it made very clear the negative issues highlighted by civil society.

The CSTF steering committee, along with the boards of VNGOC and NYNGOC, agreed to continue cooperating, and to review the structure and goals of any future organisation, taking into account the results of the evaluation and other lessons learned. The CSTF will remain the framework for the UNGASS implementation, maintaining a presence both in Vienna and New York, collaborating with member states and UN agencies to ensure all drug policy is aligned with the SDGs, or Agenda 2030.

VNGOC and NYNGOC will draft a formal proposal for a collaboration to ensure civil society participation toward 2019, however CND formulates the next stage, and the implementation of the SDGs relating to drug policy, health, human rights, sustainable development, gender, etc.

III. The Road Ahead: SDGs and Preparations for 2019

A. Sustainable Development Goals. The UN General Assembly decided that all the subsidiary organisations of the Economic and Social Council, or “parent” UN Organisation of CND, must align their policies with the SDGs. This requires member states to collaborate extensively with civil society, the private sector, academia, and implicated UN agencies. Member states will be relying on civil society organisations to provide them with information about how to coordinate drug policies that are calibrated to the SDGs. Goal 3 (“Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages”) has only one target is to “strengthen prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse.” Drug policy cuts across all the SDGs.

VNGOC and NYNGOC are discussing how to collaborate to form a joint implementation task force that is fit for purpose in the era of the Sustainable Development Goals, or Agenda 2030. VNGOC is hosting a side event at CND60 on the SDGs and drug policy. We would like each member organisation of VNGOC and NYNGOC to adopt a target or goal and report on how it is it relevant to their work.

In July 2017, a High-Level Political Forum on the SDGs will take place. Information about Civil Society participation is not fully available yet, but will be communicated once it is. [Country reports can be found here](#). Civil society advocacy is necessary to help countries understand how their drug policies affect their abilities to meet Goals and Targets. It is VNGOCs aim to help our membership to engage in that advocacy.

B. Preparations for 2019 and UNGASS Follow Up in Vienna: Intersessionals.

The post-UNGASS period has been characterised by uncertainty as to how to proceed toward the 2019 target date for review of the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action. Member states decided for the time being to focus on implementation of the practical recommendations of the Outcome Document, and are submitting regular reports on their activities at intersessionals. They have also requested VNGOC to report on the activities of its membership.

Member organisations of VNGOC and NYNGOC will be able to participate through their own organisations and through a mechanism to be set up to succeed the CSTF, as well as through [Marketplace](#). CND has recognised VNGOC’s role as a facilitator of communications between member states and NGOs that work on the ground with populations affected by global, regional, and national drug policies, and has given us an opportunity to present this work during its regular and intersessional meetings dedicated to each of the seven chapters of the Outcome Document.

To date, the Chair has allotted Civil Society four slots of three minutes each, per chapter for civil society to address progress and challenges pertaining to each. This gives the organisations the opportunity to speak in live webcast plenary sessions alongside delegates from member states and other UN Organisations. The organisations report on the work they do, and how they can collaborate with their governments on implementation. This is an unprecedented opportunity for member states to learn from civil society colleagues about what is happening in the ground in their countries regarding affected populations and drug policies. Many delegates meet with our civil society speakers after the session, for informal exchanges of information. In many cases it is the first time that they have heard the information being presented by the CSO representative.

Every time the Secretariat notifies us of an upcoming intercessional, the Board puts out a communication to the NYNGOC and a call to the membership so organisations can nominate speakers to present during the meeting either in person or via video link. Once we have a pool of speakers for topics, we jointly select the most qualified — those who work with affected populations in their own countries — and attempt to provide representation with both gender and



geographical balance. We expect that CND will continue to hold these intersessional meetings dedicated to implementation of each chapter during 2017. For more information on the UNGASS follow-up process, see <http://www.unodc.org/postungass2016/en/follow-up-process.html>. On this [page](#) you can find the text of the civil society contributions to the intersessionals and reconvened session, and the list of civil society speakers for each of the “implementation” intersessionals held at CND since September 2016.

In October, VNGOC Chair Esbjorn Hornberg was invited to speak at the opening of the OSCE conference « UNGASS 2016: Roadmap for Tackling the World Drug Problem ».

In the end of November, the current president of the General Assembly, Mr. Peter Thomson [held a meeting with the CND](#), focussing on the implementation of the SGDs. Vice-Chair Katherine Pettus spoke at that event on behalf of the VNGOC. The text of that statement can be found [here](#).

Highlights of 2016: Participation in / Organisation of

- Informal Interactive Stakeholder Consultation in preparation for UNGASS.
- Civil Society Forum at UNGASS
- Multiple presentations and side events at UNGASS 2016
- Eight (8) intercessional meetings of CND with speakers from multiple membership organisations;
- 59th CND: Informal dialogues with Executive Director of UNODC, President of INCB, and Chair of CND
- 59th CND: CSTF Briefing to Member States, Side Event on Marketplace
- Meeting to sign MOU with UNODC
- Development of side event on SDGs and drug policy for CND 60
- Development of document with UNODC staff on civil society participation in implementation of UNGASS Outcome Document within the framework of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development
- Special Event Commission on Narcotic Drugs and Commission on the Status of Women : December 2, 2016
- Launch of Marketplace

The Board agreed to develop the new Strategic Plan in relation to the post UNGASS and SDG requirements. Preliminary discussions have taken place and a substantial draft will be made available once the overall direction of the processes towards 2019 and beyond is clear. Our activities fit with the objectives of the Draft Strategic Plan, which can be found [here](#), and which we hope will be approved by the membership at the June meeting. We would like the membership to review, consider and make proposals by the end of May.

MoU with UNODC

The VNGOC and UNODC have negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding that was signed in January 2017. It defines the areas of cooperation and adds to the role of VNGOC towards the United Nations by improving the VNGOC status for joint fundraising activities. [See here for the MOU.](#)

“Marketplace” Platform

The NGO marketplace (www.mp.vngoc.org) has received further updates in the last months. An auto-translate feature has been implemented, allowing non-English speakers to participate on the platform in their respective languages. All content can now be automatically translated into a wide number of languages. Overall, around 100 organisations have registered their profiles. Tying into the discussion on the UNGASS and SDG implementation, the platform allows its users to follow UN resolutions and declarations to connect with organisations having similar interests and expertise. VNGOC will work on a guideline to promote optimal use of the platform and its features for the road ahead. All members are encouraged to register, thus improving the interactive and participatory work of VNGOC.

State of the Board.

Two Board Members (Ms. Maria Phelan, and Mr. Marcus Day — Treasurer and Vice-Treasurer) and one Auditor resigned their positions in early 2017, leaving us short handed before the next election in September. We thank them for their service throughout the challenging UNGASS Preparation and Participation period. It was suggested at recent general meetings to convene a governance committee to propose a more sustainable Board structure featuring staggered terms, rather than holding elections for the entire Board every two years. If you would like to serve on this committee, please contact: info@vngoc.org



Staff.

Daniel Quittan will be leaving us for the time being to take up his new position as father of two small children. We thank him for his dedicated service and offer him our congratulations. We have hired Ms. Sarah Pirker as a part-time staffer to coordinate Board and membership activities.

Sarah comes to us very qualified, having studied Social Anthropology in Vienna and worked in international settings both as a consultant and founder of a social venture (solar power) in East Africa.

Website. We have developed and updated the VNGOC [website](#), making it possible to join on line. Members can find minutes of earlier meetings, brief Board bios, the current membership list, and links to important events and news stories.



VNGOC Board 2016

Chairperson: Esbjörn Hörnberg (IOGT International)
Vice-Chairperson: Katherine Pettus (Int. Association for Hospice and Palliative Care)
Secretary: Luciana Pol (Centro Des Estudios Legales Y Sociales)
Deputy Secretary: Wilson Box (Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drugs Network)
Treasurer: Marcus Day (Int. Council of AIDS Service Organisations)
Deputy Treasurer: Maria Phelan (Harm Reduction International)

Ex-Officio Board members

Project Officer: Daniel Quittan

Internal Auditors (not members of the Board)

Josephine Papst (Society for the Advancement of Global Understanding)
Christian Bölckow (IOGT International)