

Background Paper for Agenda Item #9 - “The Future of the VNGOC”

In March 2019, the VNGOC General Assembly is invited to continue discussions that started at the [22nd June 2017](#) VNGOC meeting on the future of the VNGOC. The Board maintains its commitment to give this discussion the time it deserves. The expectation is not to come to a decision in March 2019, but rather the proposed resolution is for the Board to engage in a consultation period, and present a recommendation to the General Assembly by March 2020.

The discussions in June 2017, in the context of the proposal to reform the Civil Society Task Force for the 2019 Ministerial Segment, covered issues such as the relationship between the VNGOC and the New York NGO Committee (NYNGOC), and any added value (and fundraising) from a time-limited Task Force. Proposals from that meeting included merging the two Committees, renaming the VNGOC as a Global NGO Committee on Drugs, or to create more regional hubs for NGO engagement. No decision was made, however.

A VNGOC Board retreat was organized on 23rd October 2018, where the Board had the opportunity to discuss this issue at length, gathering useful information and drafting possible future scenarios. The aim of this background paper is to provide useful information to VNGOC members, to support and apprise the discussions in March 2019.

Current situation

At present, there are two independent NGO Committees focused on the issue of drugs: the VNGOC and the NYNGOC. Neither Committee currently has measures in place to ensure regional representation in their governance or membership structures, although both Committees have members from across the world. Here are some key information on the two organisations:

	VNGOC	NYNGOC
Year of establishment	1983	1984
ECOSOC status	Yes	No
Legal status	Austrian registered association	Substantive Committee CoNGO
Members (as Oct 2018)	187*	90*
Membership fee	0 - 120€	20\$
Paid staff	Yes (1)	No

*34 organizations are members of both VNGOC and NYNGO.

In March 2018, the VNGOC and NYNGOC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to jointly relaunch and manage the [Civil Society Task Force \(CSTF\) on drugs](#).¹ The CSTF's goal is to secure a comprehensive and meaningful participation of civil society actors in the 2019 Ministerial Segment. It has a larger and broader governance structure than either the VNGOC or NYNGOC - with 35 "members" representing every region, key population and global issue. The MoU (and the current mandate of the CSTF) expires three months after the Ministerial Segment, although it may be extended by mutual agreement of the VNGOC and NYNGOC, and/or for future high-level meetings.

Comparison to other civil society structures

To learn more about how civil society engagement and committees operate in other sectors, the Board gathered information on how two large civil society platforms - the CoNGO and the Major Group and other Stakeholders (MGoS) - are structured. Here are the main features of each organizational structure:

¹ <http://vngoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Draft-Memorandum-of-Understanding-23-11-2017.pdf>
www.vngoc.org

	<u>CoNGO - Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relation with the UN</u>	<u>MGoS - Major Group and other Stakeholders</u>
Initiative	Independent. CoNGO is the organization to contact when matters affect civil society organizations engagement with the UN.	Institutionalized mechanism - official mechanism for NGO participation on SDG matters.
Structure	<p>More than 30 substantive committees independent from each other in New York, Geneva and Vienna (for instance there is a Substantive Committee on Ageing in NY, another one in Geneva and another one in Vienna). There are some initiatives to have a regional outreach but overall there is not a regional coordination worldwide.</p> <p>Substantive committees work independently, but follow CoNGO's guidelines. One organization can join more than one substantive committee (there is no limit).</p> <p>(Note that NYNGOC is a CoNGO substantive committee, but the VNGOC no longer is).</p>	<p>On the whole, there are 9 major groups (children and youth, business and industry, non-governmental organizations, etc), and a number of „other stakeholder“ groups.</p> <p>At the Major Group for non-governmental organisations - NGO MG - there are three global organizing partners, eight regional organizing partners, and eight thematic clusters. New thematic clusters can be established at any time.</p> <p>The decision-making process and direction of the NGO MG is very participatory. Both the admin and substantive work are done in task forces and cluster, which are open to all the membership.</p>

<p>Governance</p>	<p>Board elected by the General Assembly of CoNGO members.</p> <p>Substantive committee representatives do not have a seat on CoNGOs board, but are invited to attend the meetings and present reports.</p>	<p>At the whole MGoS level: a Steering Group formed by one/two representative of each MGoS.</p> <p>At the NGO MG level there is a Facilitation Committee that coordinates and facilitates the work of the NGO Major Group.</p>
<p>Membership fee</p>	<p>Paid membership to CoNGO and to the registered substantive committees.</p>	<p>There is a suggested membership fee, but not mandatory for participation. Membership can be as low-threshold as filling in a contact form.</p>
<p>Participation of members</p>	<p>Participate in their organization's name at the UN level.</p>	<p>Speak on behalf of the MGoS and not their individual organizations.</p>
<p>Perceived advantages of this organizational structure</p>	<p>It is a long-standing partner of the UN (70 years) and facilitates access of NGOs to all UN processes (apart form SDGs processes).</p>	<p>Leads to the participation and interaction of NGOs at the UN level on SDGs issues, and the outcome is presented on behalf of civil society. Holds regular calls that are open to all members.</p>
<p>Perceived disadvantages of this organizational structure</p>	<p>Hierarchical structure that can be high-threshold in terms of active participation in decision making and political guidance. Most substantive committees do not work to ensure a balanced regional involvement.</p>	<p>Entails a big effort in coordination mechanisms.</p>

Questions and options to support the discussions of the General Assembly

1. Should the VNGOC rename itself to reflect a global mandate, and/or do other changes need to be made as well to effectively fulfil that mandate?
 2. Should the VNGOC and NYNGOC work towards the formation of a new Global Committee that gathers all civil society organizations worldwide in a balanced manner?
 3. Would such a Committee improve or simplify relations with the UN and other actors, avoid duplicity of work and ensure greater regional representation - or would it only increase administrative burden and complexity?
 4. Should the VNGOC remain with the same structure as it is now, with ad hoc structures formed in coordination with the NYNGOC and other relevant committees when necessary (such as the CSTF for the Ministerial Segment 2019)?
- For all of the possibilities above, how can the VNGOC facilitate the regional engagement and have a truly global reach?