

Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs (VNGOC)

VNGOC statement to the plenary CND63

Linked to agenda item 6. Follow-up to the implementation at the national, regional and international levels of all commitments, as reflected in the Ministerial Declaration of 2019 to address and counter the world drug problem.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you for giving the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs the opportunity to address the plenary session. The Committee exists to empower and support civil society groups around the world, including our more than 250 members, to engage with these international drug policy discussions and processes.

Last year's Ministerial Declaration once again committed the CND to work closely with civil society, while the UNGASS Outcome Document emphasised the important role we play in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of drug policies.

The UN-System Common Position on Drugs also promotes the active involvement and participation of civil society and local communities, including people who use drugs, as well as women and young people.

More recently, the latest alert from INCB in December 2019 concerns "The role of civil society in the development and implementation of drug policies on prevention, treatment and social reintegration", and is very much appreciated by the NGO Community.

The rhetoric is more supportive now for civil society engagement than it has ever been. But it is not only that there is a greater recognition, there is also a greater participation from civil society organizations themselves. The Ministerial Segment was attended by a record number of civil society organizations. In 2019, as VNGOC and in collaboration with our sister New York NGO Committee on Drugs we managed nearly 300 applications to speak, selecting a total of 53 speakers across seven different events. This week, there are 57 side events either organised or co-sponsored by NGOs

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– often alongside governments and UN agencies, and we also had the first civil society informal dialogue with the World Health Organization. These are certainly important milestones!

We value very positively the meaningful engagement of civil society as part of the established structure of CND sessions and thematic intersessionals, as well as the new opportunities to engage in INCB hearings and UNODC expert meetings. We urge member states to continue to seek and support these kinds of collaborations. And we urge all NGOs to take advantage of these opportunities to present and be a part of the dialogues, as we are convinced that civil society views and expertise are an invaluable resource for the CND.

Finally, I want to also take advantage of this opportunity to formally welcome Ms. Ghada Waly as the new Executive Director of UNODC. We very much look forward to working with [her/you], and we trust that under [her/your] leadership, the Office will continue to be a champion for the participation of civil society.

Thank you for your kind attention.