



EVALUATION AND FINAL REPORT

Civil Society Task Force 2018-2019



INTRODUCTION

In March 2018, the [Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs \(VNGOC\)](#) and the [New York NGO Committee on Drugs \(NYNGOC\)](#) partnered to relaunch a **Civil Society Task Force (CSTF)** for the Ministerial Segment of the 62nd session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND). Building on the successful experiences in NGO coordination for the [Beyond 2008 initiative](#), as well as for the [2016 UN General Assembly Special Session \(UNGASS\)](#) on the 'world drug problem', the goal of the CSTF was to secure the comprehensive, structured, meaningful and balanced participation of civil society in the Ministerial Segment and its preparations. More information on the CSTF's work is available at <http://www.cstfondrugs.org>.

The CSTF 2018-2019 was co-chaired by the Vienna and New York Committees, and comprised 35 members: a seven-person Steering Group, 18 regional representatives (two from each region of the world), and ten representatives from affected populations and key global issues. All members (see right) were either continued in their roles from the 2016 CSTF, or selected following open calls for nominations.



EVALUATION METHODS

The evaluation of the CSTF 2018-2019 was built into the work plan from the very start, and seeks to build upon the previous CSTF evaluation from 2016 as well (see: <https://www.cstfondrugs.org/cstf-for-ungass-2016/evaluation/>). The current evaluation comprised two elements: a face-to-face meeting of all CSTF members present at the CND in March 2019, and an online survey for all stakeholders. The survey comprised just nine substantive questions: six adopting closed Likert-scale responses, one providing multiple choice options, and two using open-ended questions.

The survey was hosted on Google Forms, to allow the end-user to translate the questions easily online if needed. The link was circulated via email, e-newsletters and social media by the VNGOC, NYNGOC and CSTF members between July and September 2019.

SURVEY RESULTS

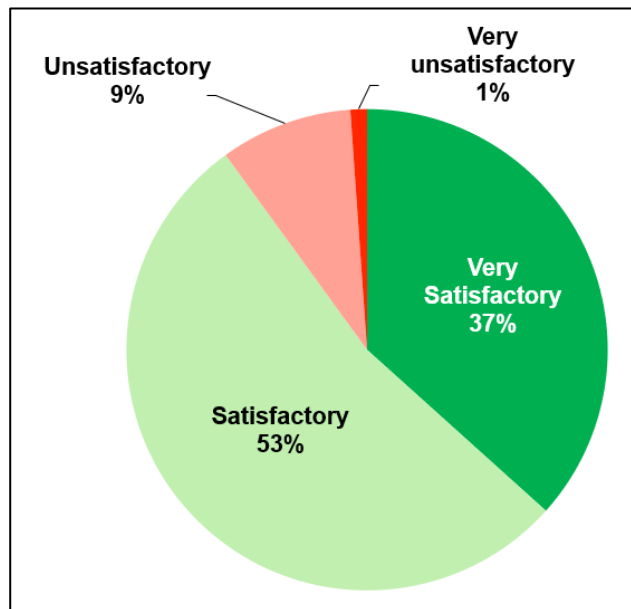
In total, 104 valid responses were received from stakeholders in 47 countries and territories, covering every region of the world.¹ For comparison, the 2016 CSTF evaluation received 190 eligible responses.

Question 1: Are you aware of the Civil Society Task Force (CSTF)?

90 (87 percent) of the respondents were aware of the CSTF prior to completing the survey, while 14 (13 percent) were not – the vast majority of the latter from the global south (Afghanistan, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Iran and Senegal). For those who selected ‘No’ to this question, no further responses were required on the Google Form, so the remaining results below are from the 90 survey responses that were aware of the CSTF.

Question 2: How would you rate the overall work of the CSTF leading up to, and at, the March 2019 Ministerial Segment?

The vast majority of respondents (81 out of 90, 90 percent) were satisfied or very satisfied with the CSTF overall – see the figure on the right. This represented a small improvement over the 2016 evaluation results.



Question 3: How well did you feel your organization was represented by the CSTF members?

There was a broader response to this question, with 20 of the 90 respondents (22 percent) reporting they felt ‘very well represented’ and a further 37 (41 percent) feeling ‘well represented’. However, 33 respondents either felt ‘poorly represented’ (14 percent) or ‘not represented’ (22 percent). Those who felt insufficiently represented came from various regions of the world, and various constituencies. For comparison, the 2016 evaluation survey found that 78 percent of respondents felt ‘very well’, ‘quite well’ or ‘satisfactorily’ represented. The slightly worse results in 2019 could partially reflect the different Likert scale used, but also likely reflects that there was less direct member engagement in the 2018-2019 work plan (regional consultations, etc) than in 2016 – due to funds, time limitations and the different advocacy needs for the 2019 Ministerial Segment of the 62nd CND.

¹ Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, France, Georgia, Greece, Guadeloupe, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, United Kingdom, USA, Zimbabwe.

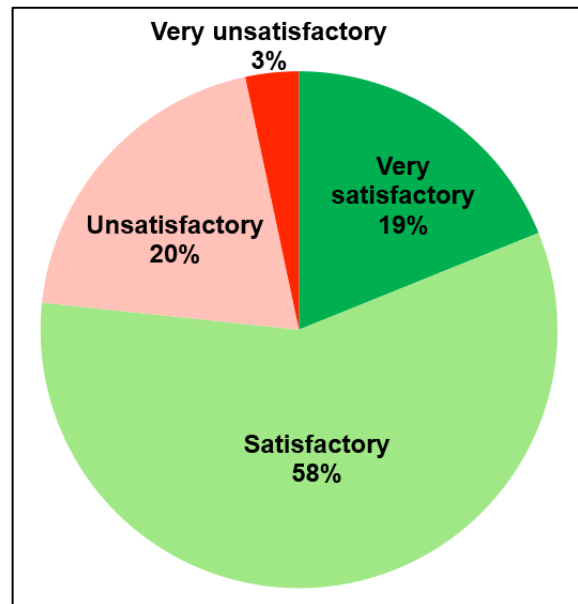
Question 4: How well did you feel your organization was engaged in the CSTF's work?

Broadly in line with the results above, nearly two-thirds of the respondents reported feeling 'very well engaged' (17 percent) or 'well engaged' (46 percent). Of the remainder, 16 (18 percent) felt that they were 'poorly engaged' and 18 (20 percent) felt that they had not been engaged. Again, those who felt insufficiently engaged came from various regions of the world, and various constituencies.

Question 5: Overall, how would you rate the March 2019 Ministerial Segment with respect to civil society engagement?

Reassuringly, more than three-quarters of the respondents felt that the 2019 Ministerial Segment was 'very satisfactory' or 'satisfactory' in terms of civil society engagement. This was a more positive result than in 2016, when 29 percent of respondents felt that the UNGASS had seen 'not enough' engagement of civil society.

Building on existing relationships forged during the UNGASS process and in Vienna where the CND is based, the CSTF was able to secure civil society panellists and speakers at all the thematic preparatory debates, as well as at the Ministerial Segment 'roundtable' debates. The preparatory resolution agreed by member states ([CND Resolution 61/10](#), March 2018) also cited the CSTF by name for the first ever time – further embedding civil society engagement into the workings of the CND.



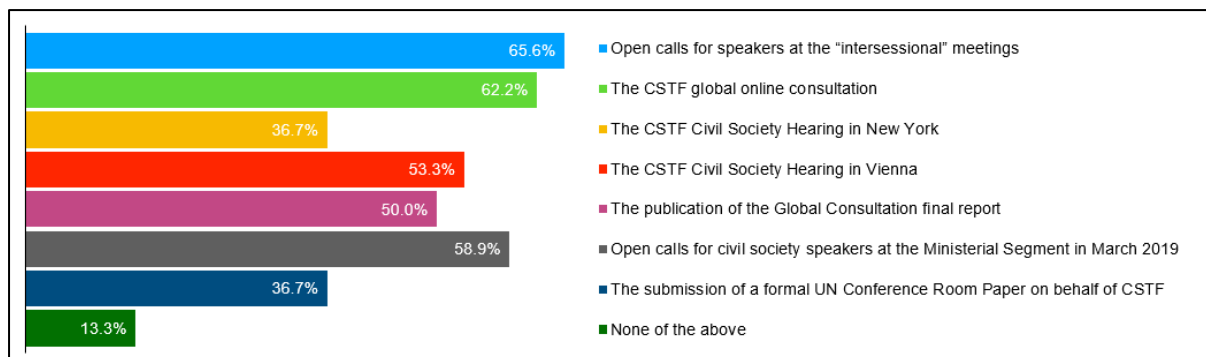
Question 6: How important do you believe it was to have a global mechanism recognised by the UN to secure the comprehensive and meaningful participation of civil society in the March 2019 Ministerial Segment?

The overwhelming majority (77 respondents, 86 percent) felt that such a global mechanism was important. Only two respondents felt that it was not important, with 11 being neutral or unsure.

Question 7: Which of the following activities of the CSTF were you aware of, or engaged in?

The highest response was for the open calls for civil society speakers that were coordinated by the CSTF ahead of each [thematic intersessional meeting](#) of the CND in the build-up to the Ministerial Segment. Based on the [UNGASS Outcome Document](#) from 2016, there were one-day meetings on demand reduction and related measures, access to controlled medicines, cross-cutting issues (human rights, youth, children, women and communities), supply reduction and related measures, cross-cutting issues (emerging and persistent challenges and threats, including new psychoactive substances, etc), alternative development, international cooperation, and "taking stock of the implementation of the commitments made" in the [2009 Political Declaration](#). For each of these, the

CSTF was requested to nominate one panellist and up to five additional speakers from the floor. Open calls were issued via email, newsletters and social media, and a balanced portfolio of speakers were selected using a transparent [Speaker Selection Guidelines](#) published on the CSTF website. Overall, the CSTF received nearly 200 applications to speak during 2018, which demonstrates the high demand for such opportunities and the eagerness from civil society partners around the world to be a part of these debates. Slightly fewer respondents, but still more than half (53 out of 90), were aware of or had engaged in the similar open calls for speakers at the Ministerial Segment itself in March 2019 – where the CSTF was once again able to nominate panellists and speakers for the two inter-governmental ‘roundtable’ discussions.



Almost two-thirds of the respondents were aware of the [CSTF Global Online Consultation](#), which was conducted via an extensive online survey translated into Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. The consultation was held in October and November 2018, and received inputs from 461 NGOs from 100 countries and territories around the world. The aim was to document and analyse civil society views to inform the intergovernmental debates taking place at the CND, and the final results were published and formally presented to member states in Vienna and New York on several occasions. Exactly half of the respondents to this evaluation survey (45 out of 90) were aware of the final consultation report, released in February 2019.

One-third and half of the respondents were aware of the CSTF Civil Society Hearings held in New York (20th February 2019) and Vienna (26th February 2019). These high-level, formal meetings at the UN premises were co-hosted by the governments of Mexico and Switzerland, respectively. They were designed to be an important opportunity to directly engage member states ahead of the Ministerial Segment, present the global consultation results (see above), and allow for a broad range of NGO representatives to present their work and messages to government and UN colleagues. The Hearings were well-attended, and also webcast to expand their reach.

Finally, around a third of the respondents were aware of the formal [Conference Room Paper](#) that was submitted by the government of Switzerland, on behalf of the CSTF. The Paper, which formed part of the official meeting documentation for member states, summarised the findings from the global consultation as well as the two Civil Society Hearings – therefore reflecting a compilation of the CSTF’s main work over the preceding twelve months. The submission of this Paper was seen by the CSTF as a major coup, but was confirmed very close to the March meeting and was not communicated as vigorously as some of the other activities. The Conference Room Paper does, however, remain as an



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official document on the CND website indefinitely, therefore creating a valuable reference point for any future efforts.

Refreshingly, only a small number (12, 13 percent) of respondents were not aware of or engaged in any of the activities listed in multiple choice for this question.

Question 8: What was the most valuable accomplishment of the CSTF in 2018 and 2019?

63 respondents answered this open-ended question, although 13 said they did not know or had no suggestions. The remaining responses can be broadly summarised as below:

- Coordinating, representing and balancing civil society engagement during 2018 and 2019 (13 respondents)
- Managing the open calls for speakers (12)
- The Global Consultation and its report (11)
- Making the voices of civil society heard (8)
- Raising awareness and disseminating information (6)
- Connecting policy makers and civil society groups (4)
- The Civil Society Hearings (2)
- Leveraging national and regional perspectives (2)
- Directly engaging with the CND (1)

Question 9: How could the CSTF improve its performance/engagement/outcomes: should there have been any additional or different types of civil society engagement in 2018 and 2019?

60 respondents answered this final, open-ended question, although nine felt that no improvements were needed. Of the remaining respondents, many commented on the need for more inclusiveness, consultation and outreach – especially to NGOs from certain sectors, perspectives and the global south. Others pointed to the need for better communications (including webinars and an enhanced social media presence), more opportunities for NGOs to meet in person, more capacity building for civil society, more funding to support participation, more engagement with member states, more translations of core materials to expand engagement, and the need to look beyond the CND and build bridges with civil society engagement mechanisms across the wider United Nations system.

REFLECTIONS FROM CSTF MEMBERS

In March 2019, a number of the CSTF members met in the margins of the CND in Vienna to reflect on the previous year and the highlights achieved (see Annex 1), identify the lessons learned and challenges faced, and discuss the next steps beyond 2019. Some of these were then further elaborated during a VNGOC Board Meeting in September 2019.

One of the most valuable elements of the 2018-2019 CSTF model was the fortnightly calls between Steering Committee members. These proved useful for coordination, monitoring progress against the work plan, and driving forward much of the logistical work behind the consultation, the Hearings, the calls for speakers, etc.



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However, the three thematic positions created on this Steering Committee – to lead on outreach, fundraising and communication – were seen as being less successful over the year and could have benefited from better defined roles, terms of reference and accountability. In future, these core tasks could be covered by multiple CSTF members rather than just one.

At the same time, the more intense project management delivered by the Steering Committee had an unintended consequence of disempowering some other members of the CSTF, or leaving them feeling that there was less to do. More delegation from the Steering Group may therefore have been needed, alongside better internal communications. In the future, opening up these regular calls to all CSTF members may also prove beneficial.

The CSTF work plan itself differed from that in 2015-2016 – focusing less on regional consultations, which also impacted on the work and outreach of some CSTF members. This reflected funding and time constraints, but also the different nature of the Ministerial Segment compared to the UNGASS (there was, for example, no comprehensive policy document being negotiated in 2019). There was also a conscious effort not to unnecessarily replicate the 2016 processes, but to build on them in 2018 and 2019. At the same time, however, some valuable outreach and awareness raising was being conducted at the local level under the banner of the CSTF (for example, in Oceania) – but this was not captured and communicated as well as it could have been. A mid-way evaluation may have been useful to identify some of these activities.

It was agreed that the Global Consultation survey was too long (at around 90 questions if all sections were completed), and the response rate was severely impacted by the inability for people to complete it over multiple visits. It was also agreed that the essential 'identifier' questions (name, organisation, etc) should have been moved to the front-end of the survey.

Overall, it was felt that the CSTF model had fulfilled its mandate in the build-up to the Ministerial Segment – as the evaluation survey results above broadly reflect. It was agreed not to formally disband the CSTF, but rather to keep it dormant as an option to return to prior to the next major UN milestone on drug policy, if required. One reason for this was to build on the fact that reference to the CSTF is now agreed language in CND resolutions, which could prove useful in the future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The VNGOC and NYNGOC wish to sincerely thank every civil society partner who engaged with or supported the Civil Society Task Force for 2019, and especially the members of the Task Force themselves. On behalf of the CSTF, we also wish to thank UNODC (especially the Civil Society Team and the Secretariat to the Governing Bodies), and also to acknowledge the essential funding provided by the governments of Russia (via UNODC), Sweden (via UNODC), the Netherlands (via the PITCH programme) and Germany (via the Global Partnership on Drug Policies and Development).



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Annex 1: Key Achievements by the CSTF 2018-2019²

January 2018	The Vienna and New York NGO Committees signed an MoU creating the CSTF
March 2018	CSTF is specifically named in CND Resolution 61/10 , cementing our role in the 2019 preparations
May 2018	CSTF officially launched , following open calls to fill the vacant positions from 2016
June 2018	CSTF speakers made coordinated statements at the UNODC World Drug Report launches in Vienna, New York City, Nairobi and Geneva
Sep / Oct / Nov 2018	Three CND thematic “intersessional” meetings – with 40 civil society panellists and speakers nominated by CSTF following open calls
Oct / Nov 2018	CSTF opened its global consultation for civil society organisations, focused on the 2009 Political Declaration, the 2016 UNGASS, the 2019 Declaration, and the Sustainable Development Goals
December 2018	Preliminary results of the CSTF global consultation were presented to member states at a lunchtime event during the “reconvened” CND session in Vienna
February 2019	CSTF Civil Society Hearings held in New York (co-hosted by Mexico) and Vienna (co-hosted by Switzerland) – bringing together member states, UN officials and civil society participants to present the final consultation report and highlight the role for NGOs in the coming decade
March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- CND Ministerial Segment takes place on 14th and 15th March 2019 in Vienna, with strong civil society participation- CSTF achievements and outcomes are captured in Conference Room Paper Seven, which was submitted by Switzerland on behalf of CSTF- CSTF Co-Chair makes opening remarks, and CSTF also selects panellists and other speakers for the two “roundtable” discussions

² From <https://mailchi.mp/06aad3760169/civil-society-task-force-on-drugs-newsletter>