

VNGOC Statement for the Joint CND & CCPCJ Beijing+25 Virtual Event

June 12, 2020, check against delivery

Chair, distinguished delegates, excellencies, and all,

Thank you for giving the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs, the NGO Alliance on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, and other selected civil society speakers the opportunity to address this most important event. My name is Penny Hill, and I am a member of the Board of the VNGOC, where I represent Harm Reduction Australia. The VNGOC exists to empower and support civil society groups from around the world, including our more than 250 members, to engage with the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and other international drug policy discussions and processes.

We highly value the opportunity to speak at this event, which marks the 25th anniversary of the *adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. The *Generation Equality* campaign demands an end to sexual harassment and all forms of violence against women and girls, access to health care services that respond specifically to the needs of women and girls, and equal participation in political life and decision-making. We have now reached the year of 2020, and although some progress has been made, we are nowhere near the realisation of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls in relation to international drug policy. We must also take this opportunity to recognise the racially disproportionate impacts that drug use and drug policies can have on women of colour and indigenous women.

As has become standard practice, the VNGOC issued an open call for speakers for this event, and are proud to have received many impressive applications from our members around the world, almost all from women, and several from women who use drugs themselves, and we

are proud that they have the opportunity to speak at this session. Applications referenced the work of our members across a broad range of relevant topics, including:

- the disproportionate impact of drug policies on women and non-cisgender people,
- the higher proportions of women imprisoned for drug-related offences,
- women in compulsory drug detention,
- the rights of women who use drugs to sexual and reproductive health rights,
- developing indicators to better explain the needs of women who produce, distribute, or use drugs,
- codesigning programmes and campaigns with women who use drugs,
- and the importance of developing and implementing gender-specific prevention, harm reduction, treatment, rehabilitation, reintegration, and recovery interventions to better address the needs of women and girls, including those in prison.

We also received applications explicitly linking the COVID-19 pandemic to an increase in unemployment and violence against women who use drugs, and a decrease in women who use drugs' access to treatment and health services. (2.30min)

. The VNGOC implore you to strive to work with your civil society counterparts to achieve gender equality in your countries' drug policies. Many Member States already work with their civil society counterparts, but in the case that you have not already met with them, the VNGOC can introduce you to our members in your country or region, or you can utilise the NGO Marketplace directory to learn more about their work.

We would like to see more country delegations to CND led by women. We warmly welcome the new Executive Director of UNODC, and hope to see even more UN agencies and bodies led by women. We also hope to continue improving the engagement of women civil society leaders at the CND. We ask that the UNODC and Member States reaffirm your commitment

to the drug-related objectives of the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*¹, including to:

- establish specific mechanisms to support and involve women’s NGOs in government policy-making and programme design,
- rationalise drug procurement to ensure a reliable, continuous supply of high-quality pharmaceuticals to women,
- provide basic and support services to women who are displaced and impacted by drug trafficking, and
- provide improved access to appropriate services, which the VNGOC defines as a range of options encompassing evidence-based prevention, harm reduction, treatment, reintegration and recovery services for women and gender diverse people, including those in prison. (4 min)

This event signifies the importance of UN system-wide coherence through joint contributions, which is more relevant now than ever before as the world continues to respond to a new global pandemic and threat. As civil society, we urge UN entities and Member States to fully support this collaboration, and we welcome future collaboration of the UNODC and UN Women. The recent UN-system Common Position on Drugs specifically mentions a commitment to promoting “the active involvement and participation of civil society and local communities, including people who use drugs, as well as women and young people”², and we encourage you to continue supporting civil society contributions to sessions such as this.

¹ https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa_e_final_web.pdf?la=en&vs=800

² <https://www.unsceb.org/CEBPublicFiles/CEB-2018-2-SoD.pdf>

We again thank you for the opportunity for civil society to speak today and implore you to work with us in close partnership towards a further accelerated realisation of gender equality in international drug policy and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals as they relate to drug policy.

Thank you for your kind attention.