

Proposal for new procedure for VNGOC Board elections

Submitted by the following VNGOC members: EURAD, IDPC, Movendi International, MUCD, Dianova, Forut and TB/HIV Care Association, for consideration by the General Assembly at the AGM in April 2021.

Rationale behind the proposal

The Vienna NGO Committee (VNGOC) is a global umbrella organization for all drug policy NGOs that are in contact with the UN Bodies in Vienna. The purpose of the VNGOC is to facilitate NGO participation in UN events and to represent the interests of civil society in UN discussions. The VNGOC does not promote specific drug policy views. Instead, it exists to allow a broad range of member organizations to express their views.

The role of the board is to liaise with the UN bodies, to speak on behalf of civil society in matters that pertain to civil society representation, to advise member organizations on engagement with the UN system to select a balanced slate of civil society speakers in debates, and to manage the governance of the umbrella organization in general.

As a global umbrella organization, it is important that the board of the VNGOC reflects the diversity of the membership in terms of drug policy perspectives, but also with regard to gender and regional representation.

Currently, the board members are elected in a simple “first past the post” vote. The candidate with the most votes, gets elected. This is a simple and straightforward election system. However, for a global umbrella organization that represents a wide range of views and are based in different countries, there is a risk that the “winner takes all” election system may result in an unrepresentative board. A majority group among the membership could win all the board positions, leaving the minority without representation. Since the composition of the board is decided in competitive elections for all board positions, the “first past the post” election system makes it difficult to ensure gender and regional representation on the board.

Given that the competitive nature of a “winner takes all” election system is not ideally suited to the collaborative nature of an umbrella organization, we propose giving an additional mandate to the Nominations Committee to present a proposed “slate” to the VNGOC membership that takes into consideration a representative and balanced Board. The slate would be a *proposal* for consideration and is not binding in any way. The members are free to vote for any candidate and all candidates remain eligible for election.

This will require a minor amendment to the current VNGOC Rules of Procedure, and to the Terms of Reference for the Nominations Committee.

Proposal for the Nominations Committee mandate:

The proposal is to give an additional mandate to the Nominations Committee to:

i) Make an assessment of the composition of the Board considering the following:

- gender balance
- geographical representation
- balanced representation of the VNGOC membership.

The Nominations Committee should determine which aspects could be addressed through the election which they are tasked with supporting.

ii) In the call for nominations for new Board members, the Nominations Committee should indicate which aspects of the criteria under point i) above they would wish to see reflected in the nominations. For example, the call for nominations could say that nominations from women are particularly encouraged or from Africa/Asia/Latin America.

iii) After all nominations have been received, the Nominations Committee will work together to collate a proposed slate based on their assessment of the Board composition that seeks to address the areas of representation outlined. This slate will be shared with the membership at least two weeks before the elections. The slate would be a *proposal* for consideration and is not binding in any way. The members are free to vote for any candidate and all candidates remain eligible for election.

Draft decision for consideration of the General Assembly at AGM:

- The AGM agrees to appoint a working group from within the VNGOC membership to take forward this proposal and suggest amendments to the Rules of Procedure and the Nominations Committee ToR.
- The AGM agrees to meet again at an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) in October 2021 when the working group will present the final revised drafts of these documents for adoption.
- The AGM agrees not to appoint the Nominations Committee for the 2022 VNGOC Elections until the proposed EGM in October 2021 when the updated Rules of Procedure and Terms of Reference for the Nominations Committee are presented and submitted for adoption.

Timeline:

April: Draft proposal presented at the AGM, opportunity for VNGOC members to comment. Working group formed to take forward the proposal and suggest amendments to the Rule of Procedure and the ToR for the Nominations Committee.

May-August: Working group refines the proposal based on comments received.

October: Final proposal presented and submitted to a vote at a VNGOC EGM, and the Nominations Committee is appointed by the General Assembly for March 2022.

March 2022: Next VNGOC Board elections will be using the new nominations procedure.