

Opening Remarks
INCB Civil Society Hearing, 19th May 2021
Jamie Bridge

Welcome to this, the third Civil Society Hearing held by the International Narcotics Control Board. This is a relatively new and evolving mechanism here in Vienna, with previous Hearings in 2018 and 2019 – and plans last year were put on ice as with so much else due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

My name is Jamie Bridge, and I am the Chair of the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs. We are a global network of around 400 NGOs around the world, whose main purpose is to facilitate the engagement of civil society with the UN and related drug policy discussions here in Vienna. Naturally, we warmly welcome these opportunities and thank the Board for once again making space in their agenda for this dialogue with NGOs.

Before I go any further, I want to congratulate Cornelius on his re-election to the Board, and also to welcome Mark Colhoun in his new role as the INCB Secretary.

These Hearings are a great opportunity for NGOs to have a dialogue with the Board, particularly around the topics of focus for the coming INCB reports – and this year, as we have heard, the topic is illicit financial flows. The VNGOC select the speakers today through an open call – as we always do – and I'm delighted that we have speakers from various different regions and perspectives today.

This session is being recorded so that it can be watched by other civil society colleagues, and the video and presentations will also be available on the VNGOC website. Thanks again to INCB for enabling this. These Hearings are just one part of the INCB's increasing commitment and support for civil society engagement. NGOs are regularly contacted during the Board's country visits, and we look forward to these starting up again soon, and in December 2019 the INCB also released its first Alert on the role of civil society, which was very much appreciated.

So we look forward to this relationship continuing to grow, and I hope that today's session is helpful and informative both for the NGOs but also for the Board members too. Thank you.

