

Way forward to 2019

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by thanking the Chair together with the Facilitator and the Secretariat for your eminent work to include civil society in the follow up on UNGASS and the implementation of the Outcome document. For many of our member organisations, some of them from the global south, this has been an invaluable opportunity to share expertise and practices, both successful and unsuccessful, addressing existing and new challenges related to the prevention, treatment, harm reduction and recovery.

When we now are looking forward to the 'Ministerial Segment' meeting in 2019, and the review of progress made against the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action, we welcome the proposal from the Chair to incorporate a Civil Society Hearing. To make this event as constructive as possible, we would like to stress the importance of having civil society consultations and inputs during the whole preparation process, and not just on this one day. One possible way to achieve this is to arrange another consultation during September – October 2018 where shadow reports from civil society can be discussed.

To be prepared for this, the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs (VNGOC) believes that promoting a culture of respectful and constructive engagement within the civil society community, as well as with other stakeholders. VNGOC can help identify what works and what can be improved in order to optimally respond to realities on the ground. We are also uniquely placed to identify the common ground that is held within a diverse civil society sector. It is our belief that such a culture of mutual respect constitutes the basis for sustainable responses to drug related problems.

On the practical level, the VNGOC is already working alongside the New York NGO Committee (NYNGOC) to reorganise the Civil Society Task Force to mobilise voices from all over the globe for 2018 and 2019. The challenge here is funding, where the Member States must feel responsibility. Without special funding, the representation of civil society will be limited to a few representatives who can engage here in Vienna, mainly groups from the global north. This would be a missed opportunity for us all.

To conclude, the VNGOC remains committed to a respectful and constructive dialogue with all stakeholders, from grassroots communities to UN Missions. It is our belief that such dialogue will go a long way to ensure effective implementation of international drug policy commitments, Agenda 2030 goals and targets, and, most importantly, achieving meaningful and lasting change in our communities.

Thank you for your attention.

Esbjörn Hörnberg
Chair VNGOC