

VNGOC / CSTF Intervention at CND Intersessional, November

Thank you, Madame Chair, for giving me the floor and for allowing me to speak today as Chair of the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs, and as Co-Chair of the Civil Society Task Force for March 2019.

Excellences, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

In the context of preparations for the 62nd session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, I wanted to take this opportunity to inform member state colleagues about the processes that we have followed in selecting civil society speakers for this latest round of intersessional meetings – but also, we anticipate, for the High-Level Ministerial Segment itself.

For each speaking opportunity that we have – either on panels, from the floor or by video – the Civil Society Task Force issues an open call to NGOs around the world to apply. This autumn, we received 116 applications to speak. The Civil Society Task Force then convenes a working group to review the applications and select a roster that is balanced in terms of regions, themes, perspectives and gender, but also one that is high quality and relevant to the themes. With the kind support of our donors, the Task Force has also been able to fund some of the speakers to travel to Vienna.

Civil society speakers come from a variety of backgrounds and have a variety of different perspectives. They work at the global, regional, national and grass-roots levels. Some are here to tell their personal stories, some have never been to an international forum before. This is all a positive outcome of civil society engagement and the Civil Society Task Force's work.

Sometimes, the messages that civil society speakers have can be challenging. In many settings, our role as civil society is to be the “critical friend” of governments. However, I also want to reassure

colleagues in this room that each civil society speaker is asked to submit their statement or video in advance. The Civil Society Task Force is then able to advise speakers, where necessary, on how to communicate their important messages in the most productive, constructive and diplomatic way possible. Collectively, we are learning all of the time in this regard and appreciate the ongoing support and feedback from you all.

Madame Chair,

I want to thank you, member states, the UNODC Civil Society Team and the CND Secretariat for your ongoing leadership in ensuring the meaningful engagement of civil society here in Vienna – and for maintaining the best practices that have developed in this regard over recent years, including at the UNGASS itself.

Finally, I want to inform member states about a special lunchtime event during the reconvened CND meeting, at 1.30 on Wednesday 5th December. This event will allow the Civil Society Task Force to present the results of our global online consultation, which gathers NGO views on the 2009 targets, the 2016 UNGASS and the Sustainable Development Goals. The consultation closed last weekend, so we are now translating and analysing responses from nearly 500 NGOs. The event on 5th December will therefore provide the strongest indication of civil society's views, reflections and recommendations for the Ministerial Segment and beyond. We will also provide some lunch for you all!

I look forward to seeing you there, and remain available to discuss the work of the Civil Society Task Force with any of you at any time.

Thank you for your kind attention.