

## **Statement by Vienna NGO Committee (VNGOC)**

### **Agenda Item 3: General Debate Monday 13th March 2023**

Thank you, Ambassador, for giving me floor, and a warm congratulations on your election as CND Chair.

Distinguished delegates, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to speak today, as this year marks the 40th anniversary for the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs, which was founded in 1983. It is also my last time addressing you all as Chair, as our 366 members from 100 countries will be electing a new VNGOC Chairperson on Thursday afternoon.

I want to say a few words about the civil society engagement here at CND, and the added value that we can bring to your work and deliberations, as I am aware that this has been a topic of discussion among member states over the past weeks.

With the support of successive Chairs, the CND Secretariat and UNODC, we have developed a healthy, productive level of NGO participation here in Vienna – building on the foundations laid by the Rules of Procedure of the functional commissions of ECOSOC, as well as ECOSOC resolution 1996/31.

This year, we are delighted to see the return of a strong, diverse civil society presence here in Vienna, as well as those joining online. There are several hundred civil society participants registered this week from more than 120 ECOSOC accredited NGOs. We bring our unique expertise and experience to the work of the CND – both in the Plenary and through our side events – and we speak from a comprehensive range of different perspectives that span across the full scope of the world drug situation.

I welcome all member states to engage with the NGOs who are here this week, to hear and consider what we have to say, and to read the reports, research and other documents we are providing – both on the table outside this room, and on the new “virtual NGO table” accessible via the 66th session webpage.

As the Vienna NGO Committee, our mission is to support, promote and protect the engagement of civil society at CND – something we have been doing for 40 years and will hopefully continue to do for many more. To that end, we are here to assist you in any way that we can, and I wish you all a productive CND.

Thank you.