Dear Chair, Excellencies and distinguished delegates,

I’m speaking under the umbrella of the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs. Peter Moilanen is my name and I’m the head of Drug Policy Centre in Sweden. Thank you for the opportunity to address you regarding what we can do to decrease drug related death. A very important matter.

In our contacts with people with experience in drugs and through some research, we see that some of the death related to drugs are because some people avoid calling ambulance as they are afraid of being reported by the police as handling drugs is criminalized.

One of the goals with the three UN Conventions on Drugs is preventing the abuse of psychoactive substances, as we could read in the thematic discussions for these sessions, and for that the conventions serves it purpose well. To prevent people from start using drugs or use less. But it cannot be a purpose of avoid calling an ambulance and risk death by overdose. How to combine these two without changing the conventions?

One solution is to implement the so-called Good Samaritan law, meaning the police helps to save lives during an overdose situation and refrain from punishing or reporting the situation. This law is implemented in some countries including Canada and at least 46 states of America.

Different studies point out that more people are calling the emergency phone number after the implementation of the Good Samaritan law, but that information about the law is not that well known and that it is working better with Naloxon included.

When it comes to drug overdose deaths everything is not fine as it is. We need a more humane approach without stepping away from the UN conventions. The Good Samaritan law helps us combine the intentions of the UN Conventions with a human right approach to decrease drug use among people. While at the same time having a human right approach to saving lives at an overdose situation. It is a good practise with research showcasing its advantages and challenges.

We call on you to consider the Good Samaritan law as one example in your further discussions about how to decrease drug related death whilst abiding to the UN Conventions on Drugs.

Thank you.