

Civil Society Task Force on Drugs

Statement for 26th June 2018

To be delivered in Vienna, New York and Nairobi

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I have the pleasure of speaking today on behalf of the Civil Society Task Force on Drugs – a joint initiative of the Vienna and New York NGO Committees as we look forward to the 2019 Ministerial Segment of the 62nd Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak today as we mark the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, as well as the launch of the flagship World Drug Report.

2019 is a major milestone for the international drug control system, and an important opportunity for member states to plot a course for the coming decade, to build on the agreements and commitments from 2009, 2014 and 2016, and to steer us all closer to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Civil society has a key role to play both in the implementation of international drug policy commitments, but also in the multilateral debates and discussions. Civil society organisations are at the coal face of drug policy – providing essential services and support to people around the world, and sharing realities from the field. We bring expertise, experience and new perspectives to the continuing dialogue on the world drug problem, and we appreciate the increasingly open way that our voices are being heard here at the United Nations.

Both the 2009 and 2016 documents specifically highlight the important role of civil society in addressing and countering the world drug problem, and the participatory role that we can play. Furthermore, CND Resolution 61/10 specifically mentions the role of the Civil Society Task Force.

The CSTF was initially created for the UNGASS in 2016, but has been replenished and relaunched with these commitments in mind. Following an open, global call for members, the Task Force now comprises 35 volunteers representing regions of the world, affected populations and global issues. It is co-chaired by the VNGOC Chair, Jamie Bridge, and the New York NGO Committee Chair, Heather Haase.

Our goal is to ensure the meaningful participation of civil society in the lead-up to the Ministerial Segment, and at the meeting itself. The CSTF actively embraces the breadth of views among civil society actors, and acknowledges that there is no simple 'one size fits all' answer. Yet we can also comfortably come together on key messages: drug policies should fully respect human rights; drug policies should serve to protect the health and well-being of individuals and communities; and drug policies should strive to support the Sustainable Development Goals. We condemn the use of the death penalty or extrajudicial killings for drug offences.

The Task Force has developed an ambitious work plan for 2018, including a global civil society consultation in the six official UN languages. But we need your support, as member states and partners, to achieve our aims over the coming year. We have developed a launch document and a funding proposal, both of which are available on our website: [CSTF on drugs \[dot\] org](http://CSTF on drugs [dot] org).

We look forward to working in close partnership with you all throughout 2018 and 2019, and I thank you for your time and attention.