

## Engagement of the Civil Society Task Force and other civil society organisations in the preparatory process of the UNGASS in 2016<sup>1</sup>

The UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs ([UNGASS](#)) set up for April 2016 will be a unique and important opportunity for a wide-ranging discussion among Member States, UN agencies, civil society (CS) and other stakeholders. The beneficial role CS can play in the preparation of this meeting has been widely acknowledged by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), the General Assembly, and Member States in numerous public statements and in UN resolutions.

The Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs (VNGOC) and its fellow committee, the New York NGO Committee on Drugs (NYNGOC), are the two substantive committees on drug-related matters at the UN under the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO). The two committees have a long history of collaboration on international conferences around high-level meetings, including at the 1998 UNGASS with the “NGO Village” and later in “[Beyond 2008](#)”.

Building on the success of Beyond 2008 and after reviewing best practices of CS involvement in recent high-level UN General Assembly meetings in other areas, the committees convened a Civil Society Task Force (CSTF) as the best way to ensure a *comprehensive, structured, meaningful and balanced participation of CS* during the preparatory process of and at the UNGASS in 2016.

### SUMMARY

The CSTF is designed to secure CS engagement in the preparatory process of and at the UNGASS in 2016 by providing a structure which ensures the effective inclusion of civil society organisations’ (CSO) voices. The VNGOC and NYNGOC have overseen the composition of the CSTF, aiming for an overall balance in terms of both geography and approaches to drug policies and interventions.

The CSTF is comprised of 31 members: a 4-member Steering Committee (consisting of officers from each of the committees), 18 regional representatives and 9 representatives of affected populations/global approaches: youth, families, drug users, recovered users, cultivators, access to essential medicines, prevention, harm reduction and criminal justice. The UNODC Civil Society Team holds an ex officio position on the CSTF. The membership of the CSTF is listed in Annex I.

As the official CS liaison to the UN for UNGASS, the CSTF has undertaken to: 1) identify speakers for UNGASS-related events, 2) collect inputs from CS through a global survey and regional consultations, 3) hold an interactive hearing three months prior to UNGASS, and 4) lead the drafting of the CS input document to support Member States’ negotiations in the lead-up to the UNGASS.

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<sup>1</sup> as of 2 November 2015

## BACKGROUND

The CND and the General Assembly both recognize “*the need for the active involvement [of civil society] in the preparations for the special session, as well as the need for their effective, substantive and active involvement during the special session, in accordance with the rules of procedure and practice developed for other special sessions of the General Assembly.*”<sup>2</sup>

In order to provide a platform for this involvement, the VNGOC and NYNGOC reviewed best practices of CS participation in other recent high-level UN General Assembly meetings in areas such as migration, prevention of non-communicable diseases, HIV/AIDS, and protection of indigenous cultures, and convened the CSTF as the best way to ensure that CS involvement was not only “effective, substantive and active,” but also comprehensive, structured, meaningful and balanced in the lead-up to the UNGASS in 2016.

After a meeting with Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, and members of the NGO community, on the margins of the 57th session of the CND High-level Review in March 2014, a proposal outlining the terms of the CSTF was drafted and then finalised in November 2014.

The CSTF was officially [launched](#) on 3 December 2014 in Vienna, during an event co-sponsored by the Permanent Missions of Italy, Mexico, Norway, Sweden and the United States of America. The event was chaired by H.E. Ambassador Bente Angell-Hansen, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Norway to the International Organizations in Vienna. On the occasion, Ambassador Khaled Shamaa, then Chair of the 57<sup>th</sup> session of the CND and currently Chair of the UNGASS Board, as well as Mr. Aldo Lale-Demoz, UNODC Deputy-Director, welcomed the creation of the CSTF.

After a thorough and meticulous selection process, the CSTF was fully convened and members were introduced at the [4th Civil Society Hearing](#) held during the 58th session of the CND in March 2015. Since that time the CSTF has been fully operational.

## ACTIVITIES

In the lead up to the UNGASS in 2016, the Civil Society Task Force has undertaken to:

**1) Identify speakers and participants in all relevant UNGASS events.** The CSTF has been asked to make recommendations for speakers at UNGASS-related events: 1) by the UNGASS Board Chair, for the UNGASS Special Segment at the 58th Session of the CND (9-12 March 2015), and 2) by the President of the General Assembly for the High-Level Thematic Debate on Drugs on 7 May 2015. The CSTF is currently building a list of potential speakers from all regions and thematic areas represented on the CSTF for upcoming events.

At the 58th annual session of the CND in March 2015 (9-17 March 2015), 228 non-governmental organisations (NGO) representatives, representing over 70 NGO and NGO umbrella organisations, participated in the UNGASS Special Segment. This included the members of the CSTF.

NGO representatives and members of the CSTF have also participated in all CND intersessional meetings thus far in Vienna, as well as in the special events and information briefings organised by the CND in Vienna (26 June 2015), Geneva (28 September 2015) and New York (2 October 2015) as part of the UNGASS preparatory process.

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<sup>2</sup> [CND resolution 57/5](#) and General Assembly Resolution [A/RES/69/200](#)

Through their statements and advocacy efforts, CSOs working on drug related issues represented by the CSTF have made substantive contributions to the UNGASS preparatory process. Also, written contributions submitted by other CSOs have been posted on [www.ungass2016.org](http://www.ungass2016.org).

**2) Disseminated, promoted and compiled data from the UNGASS 2016 Global Civil Society Survey.** A working group made up of VNGOC and NYNGOC members produced the UNGASS 2016 [Global Civil Society Survey](#), designed to provide an initial assessment on the civil society work in the field of drugs, as well as to assess the awareness and level of knowledge and interest in participating actively in the UNGASS 2016 preparatory process at the regional and global levels. The Global Survey was translated to 11 languages and was made available on the VNGOC and NYNGOC websites. It was widely and successfully promoted to CSO networks and communities around the world.

To date, the data has been partly translated to English and analysed. These [preliminary results](#) of the Global Survey were presented during a [briefing](#) to Member States organised on the margins of the CND intersessional meeting on 24 September 2015. They were also the basis for the [recommendations](#) provided by the CSTF for the “Zero Draft” of the Outcome Document for UNGASS 2016 early September 2015, which were shared with the UNGASS Board and Member States.

The final results of the Global Survey will inform the final document by civil society to be presented to Member States in preparation for UNGASS.

**3) Lead Regional Consultations or Thematic Consultations according to their geographic focus or area of expertise.** CSTF members have been conducting consultations in their geographic regions or areas on the five thematic areas included in the modalities’ resolution<sup>3</sup>. The consultations have taken place in two phases, electronic and in person (where feasible). The CSTF members are expected to discuss and collect the input under the five headings or themes as far as possible, keeping in mind: 1) what works and what could be improved, 2) best practices so far known (and where there are gaps in knowledge), 3) innovative thinking, policy and policy implementation, and 4) expectations of UNGASS 2016 and beyond. Members are to produce three reports: a report on the electronic consultation, from the in-person consultation and a final consolidated report on the activities of Phase 1 and 2. The information in these reports will be used to produce the final output document to be presented to Member States in preparation for UNGASS.

To date, the following CSTF national and regional consultations have taken place: Sub-Saharan Africa (Accra, Ghana, 24-25 September 2015; Dakar, Senegal, 28-29 September 2015; Lilongwe, Malawi, 2-3 October 2015 and Nairobi, Kenya, 5-6 October 2015) and South Asia (New Delhi, India, 31 October 2015). Upcoming regional consultations include those in Latin America and the Caribbean (Bogota, 4-5 November 2015) and Middle East and Northern Africa and Central Asia (Istanbul, 26-27 November 2015). The UNODC Civil Society Team, the UNODC Regional Office for West and Central Africa, the UNODC Regional Office for Eastern Africa, the UNODC Regional Office for South Asia, as well as the UNODC Country Office for Colombia have supported the CSTF in organising some of these events.

**4) Organize an Interactive Civil Society Hearing three months prior to UNGASS.** Prior to high-level General Assembly meetings in other areas such as migration, prevention of non-communicable diseases, HIV/AIDS, protection of indigenous cultures and the post-2015 Development Agenda, the President of the General Assembly has hosted a one- or two-day interactive hearing for civil society. Building on this track record, an interactive Civil Society Hearing is expected to take place in New York in February 2015.

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<sup>3</sup> [CND Resolution 58/8](#) currently on the agenda for adoption by the General Assembly at its 70<sup>th</sup> session. The proposed themes for the five roundtables at the UNGASS in 2016 are 1) drugs and health; 2) drugs and crime; 3) cross-cutting issues: drugs and human rights, youth, women, children and communities; 4) cross-cutting issues: new challenges, threats and realities in preventing and addressing the world drug problem; and 5) drugs and alternative development.

Other upcoming CSTF events include:

- December 2015: CSTF Briefing to Member States on the margins of the reconvened 58<sup>th</sup> session of the CND
- end of January 2016: Joint event with WHO in Geneva
- mid-March 2016: Civil Society Hearing and side events at the 59<sup>th</sup> session of the CND
- 18 April 2016: Civil Society Hearing before UNGASS
- 19-21 April 2016: side events at UNGASS, as well as co-sponsorship of and participation in special events organised by UNODC.

## **EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

The CSTF seeks to achieve the following outcomes:

- NGOs around the world will be more engaged with Member States and relevant UN bodies in the preparatory process of and at UNGASS 2016, and there will be heightened awareness and engagement of NGOs in the UNGASS process and in the international drug control system as a whole as a result of direct participation in the Global CS Survey, Regional/Thematic Consultations and NGO awareness-raising events.
- Through the Global CS Survey, Member States will receive direct input and will be more informed on (1) the work of NGOs active in the drug field, (2) areas of expertise, (3) key priorities and concerns to be addressed (4) best practices, as well as (5) expected results and desired outcomes for UNGASS 2016, which will support Member States in identifying priorities to be addressed and in forming a clearer picture of CS knowledge of and priorities for UNGASS.
- Through the Regional Consultations and CS hearings, Member States will receive direct input and will be more informed on 1) what works and what could be improved, 2) best practices, 3) innovative thinking, policy and policy implementation, and 4) expectations of UNGASS 2016 and beyond, which will support Member States in formulating the outcome document for the UNGASS as well as their national drug policies going forward.
- A global NGO voice will be presented at UNGASS 2016, with the CSTF leading development and delivery of NGO contributions on achievements, challenges and priorities for international drug policy at UNGASS 2016, coordinating NGO participation in these processes, and developing and publishing results of the Global Survey, Regional or Thematic Consultations and the CS output document.

## ANNEX I. COMPOSITION OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY TASK FORCE FOR UNGASS 2016

### STEERING COMMITTEE

Chair, Steering Group	Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs	Esbjörn Hörnberg
Vice-Chair, Steering Group	New York NGO Committee on Drugs	Heather Haase
Vice-Chair, Steering Group	Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs	Elisa Rubini
Secretary, Steering Group	New York NGO Committee on Drugs	Allan Clear

### MEMBERS OF THE CSTF

No.	Category	Organisation	Representative
1.	Affected Population: Farmers	Transnational Institute (TNI)	Pien Metaal
2.	Affected Populations: Palliative Care/Essential Medicines	International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care (IAHPC)	Katherine Pettus
3.	Affected Populations: Recovered Users	Celebrate Recovery, NGO Proslavi Oporavak, Recovered Users Network (RUN)	Boro Goic
4.	Affected populations: Families	Organization of the Families of Asia and the Pacific (OFAP)	Nuno Jorge
5.	Affected Populations: Users	International Network of People Who Use Drugs (INPUD)	Holly Bradford
6.	Affected Populations: Youth	Active, Friendship and Peace	Vasilka Lalevska
7.	Prevention, global voice	World Federation Against Drugs (WFAD)	Linda Nilsson
8.	Harm reduction, global voice	Harm Reduction International	Rick Lines
9.	Criminal justice, global voice	Penal Reform International (PNI)	Andrea Huber
10.	Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific	New Zealand Drug Foundation (NZDF) - Te Tuapapa Tarukino o Aotearoa	Ross Bell
11.	Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific	Australian Drug Foundation (ADF) and Cancer Council Australia	Margaret Hamilton
12.	Central- and North America	Centros de Integración Juvenil (CIJ)	Carmen Fernandez Cáceres
13.	Central- and North America	Canadian Drug Policy Coalition	Donald MacPherson
14.	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Eurasian Harm Reduction Network (EHRN)	Dasha Ocheret
15.	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Turkish Green Crescent	Ahmet Zeki Olas
16.	Latin America and the Caribbean	Red Iberoamericana de Organizaciones no Gubernamentales que Trabajan en Drogodependencias (RIOD)	Margarita María Sánchez Villegas
17.	Latin America and the Caribbean	Intercambios Asociación Civil	Pablo Cymerman
18.	Northern Africa and the Middle East/ Central Asia	Rebirth Society/Asian DDR NGOs Association	Abbas Deilamizade
19.	Northern Africa and the Middle East/ Central Asia	Skoun- Lebanese Addictions Center	Sandy Mteirik
20.	South Asia	India HIV/AIDS Alliance	Simon Beddoe
21.	South Asia	Alcohol and Drug Information Centre Sri Lanka	Pubudu Sumanasekera
22.	South-East and East Asia	Center for Supporting Community Development Initiatives (SCDI)	Khuat Thi Hai Oanh
23.	South-East and East Asia/ Affected Populations: Alternative Development	Mae Fah Luang Foundation/Doi Tung Development Project	M.L. Dispanadda Diskul Duke
24.	Sub Saharan Africa	PILS (Prevention Information et Lutte Contre le Sida)/CUT (Collectif Urgence Toxida)	Nathalie Rose
25.	Sub Saharan Africa	People Against Drug Dependence & Ignorance (Paddi) Foundation	Eze Eluchie
26.	Western Europe	International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC)	Ann Fordham
27.	Western Europe	Europe Against Drugs (EURAD)	Fay Watson