

# Report on VNGOC meeting June 26, 2013



Read VNGOC Chair Michel Perron's address to the morning session of the 2013 World Drug Report Launch at [vngoc.org](http://vngoc.org). He suggested that NGO technical assistance is essential to member states' informed participation at CND sessions and that they should earmark a portion of the contribution to UNODOC for NGO activities.

## Introductions and Strategic Plan

After introductions all around, the Chair Michel Perron introduced the new VNGOC Project Officer: Daniel Quittan, a former UNODC consultant. He will work through the end of March as part time staff support and is paid through a small grant awarded to VNGOC. David Turner is undergoing treatment for lymphoma.

Michel presented the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan, which reflects the higher profile and increased level of involvement of VNGOC at the CND. It is based on the principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence within the rules and procedures of the UN system.

The plan has four strategic objectives.

- Develop NGO Capacity to engage UN member states and relevant UN bodies
- Create opportunities for NGO engagement with UN member states and relevant UN Bodies
- Advocate for NGO inclusion in international drug policy decision-making
- Present a global NGO voice at key strategic events such as High Level Review and 2016 UNGASS.

The first objective largely involves developing, updating, and distributing materials and guides that are useful to NGOs wishing to participate in the CND, including how to get ECOSOC status. VNGOC also wants have an NGO training and professional

development strategy, for which it needs cash. Michel believes that the member states may provide some of this cash once they understand how NGO partnerships can enhance member state productivity. Improving NGO engagement and effectiveness is a win-win proposition for member states.

The second objective involves hosting the CND informal civil society hearings and informal dialogues such as those with the Chair of the CND, President INCB, the Executive Director of UNODC, etc. With respect to the upcoming High Level Review VNGOC is expecting to have many dialogs on the margins and asked to be included in the Report. VNGOC will continue to coordinate and/or host side events, draft and deliver oral and written statements, conference room papers, and facilitate networking at the lounge and via regular briefings. The Board is also developing a strategy to link NGOs to UNODOC regional offices

The third objective involves holding annual meetings with UNODC Senior Management Team (SMT), with the CND Secretariat to arrange logistics and review experience, and with the INCB President to review the year's experience and facilitate identification of NGOs for INCB missions. It is also key to liaise with other NGO coordinators (NYC Committee CoNGO and VANGOPCJ).

The fourth objective involves coordinating NGO input and participation during preparations and at 2014 High Level Review, identifying and coordinating opportunities for VNGOC input into 2015 MDG review process, and leading development and delivery of NGO contributions during preparations for 2016 UNGASS.

The open question the Committee needs to answer, and is looking for input on, is "what are we advocating for?" and what is the best process to facilitate receiving and processing answers to that question. Clearly it is a "gargantuan task" in Michel's words, as was the 2008 experience. Outreach will be largely electronic but it is not clear how it will be organized and what part members will play, although it is clearly up to the members to shape the strategy. One idea is to focus regionally, piggyback on other conferences, capitalize on existing events. We need to develop a series of set recommendations so that we have our own channel when it comes to 2016.

The next section of the meeting focused on effective and efficient management and governance, a key aspect that will give member states the confidence to invest in VNGOC. The important thing is to be clear in terms of our ask. Exactly what are we asking member states to contribute and what can they expect in return?

## **ECOSOC status for VNGOC**

There was some discussion about the advantages and consequence of VNGOC applying for and gaining ECOSOC status, which is in the planning stages. Since VNGOC is now a legal entity in Austria, it can seek ECOSOC status. There was some question

about whether this could affect other (VNGOC) members' ECOSOC status, or somehow restrict it. Michel replied that being a member of VNGOC does not diminish an organization's own identity or in any way diminish its individual ECOSOC status. ECOSOC status signifies that the UN recognizes what an NGO is doing, and doesn't mean that VNGOC would have the "lead" on drugs issues. ECOSOC status for VNGOC shouldn't be perceived as a threat to the individuality of its member NGOs or as a source of competition for funding. The idea of cross-membership is synergistic since VNGOC focuses on process, not on substance. We always circulate our policy statements prior to issuing them so that members can comment. This is not the same as allowing individual members a veto; comments are reflected and incorporated into the final statements.

VNGOC is 30 years old this year (2013). There was one founding member in the room.  
*The collective experience of VNGOC exceeds that of any of the member states.*

The Strategic Plan was approved unanimously.

## **2014 High Level Review**

The Commission (CND) has launched an inter-governmental process to develop the document and Declaration. Initial input is sought from Member States by early July. The text received will form a preliminary reports skeleton that will be modified going forward. There are four intersessionals planned, the first three of which will deal exclusively with one theme at a time beginning with demand reduction, then supply reduction and money laundering. The fourth meeting will presumably be set aside for a final wrap up / edit session. The Secretariat has also launched a web site at LINK, which will contain all relevant information for this process.

*VNGOC has been asked by UNODC to coordinate input into this process with initial thoughts on each of the three themes.* VNGOC members have been asked to provide that input by (date to be determined). Also, VNGOC has created an informal drafting committee to review text provided informally by member state for NGO reaction/input. That committees work is ad hoc but will be most active after summer and throughout the Fall.

## **Funding strategies and membership**

Now that VNGOC is an officially registered entity, it can apply for EU funds. Two thirds of the members are non-dues paying. Forty members are members paid up. We have to be careful about where we look for funds given that member states want to see VNGOC evolve as an impartial organization.

There has been an explosion of interest in VNGOC, with some new members: the International Federation on Aging, the Eurasian Harm reduction Network, the

National Association of Criminologists of Majorca, the International Aids Society, and Open Society Institute. New applicants include WOLA, Malaysian AIDS Council, New Line Social Organization (Afghanistan), and International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care.

There was discussion about whether there should be two-tier membership for the fully paid and the unpaid, who would be “correspondent” members, or whether the “wealthier” organizations would sponsor those from the LMICs who could not pay the membership fee. This was unresolved.

## **Report from CoNGO**

There was a report from CoNGO (Committee of NGOs), a conference of NGOs with consultative relationship with the United Nations. CoNGO was founded in 1948 as an independent international, non-profit membership assn. of NGOs. It is most active in NY, Geneva and Vienna and trying to establish a network in Africa. NGOs with full CoNGO membership status have ECOSOC status. There is also an associate membership category. Members span a large range of vital interests, including human rights, gender, peace and disarmament, social justice, etc. 400 member organizations, Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, WCC. Baptist World Alliance. CoNGO provides a supportive platform for a civil society organizations and represents a global community of informed empowered and committed NGOs that fully participate...It's goal is to improve NGO accessibility and presence at all levels of the UN, strengthen dialogue between UN and non-governmental organizations, engage NGOs to work together on issues of common interest, provide education/capacity development for NGOs.

It does not take substantive positions, but provides a forum for NGOs with common interests. [www.ngocongo.org](http://www.ngocongo.org) \$200 membership per year.

December 12 2:30 pm next meeting.