

March 2021

### URGENT RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROTECT CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION AT THE 64TH UN COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS (CND)

Civil society has, rightly, long been an integral part of CND proceedings and debates – engaging alongside member states, UN officials, academics and others through interventions, side events, disseminating materials, and holding bilateral meetings. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the 64th CND (12-16 April 2021) will take a “hybrid” format – with the vast majority of participants from outside of Vienna participating online.

With the precise modalities of a hybrid Commission still to be announced, the [Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs \(VNGOC\)](#)<sup>1</sup> would like to make the following practical and realistic recommendations to ensure strong and meaningful civil society participation – despite the many challenges that exist. We acknowledge the hard work of the CND Secretariat, Bureau and others towards this, but also believe that an online CND should be an opportunity to *expand* participation, rather than limit it. Furthermore, 2021 could be a good opportunity to implement permanent procedures to facilitate the active, online participation of NGOs from around the world in 2022 and beyond.

#### REGISTRATION AND PARTICIPATION

- ☐ Clarity must be provided as soon as possible about **when and how** civil society organisations can register to attend the 64th CND, and **what form** that attendance will take.
- ☐ UNODC should act swiftly to collate and assess feedback (including from civil society) following the Kyoto Crime Congress (7-12 March 2021) and its online platform – so that the **necessary remedial changes** can be enacted in time for the CND four weeks later.
- ☐ Between the Crime Congress and the CND, there must be a **regular flow of clear and quick updates** and communications from UNODC to civil society – including through the UNODC Civil Society Unit, the [64th CND web-page](#), and the NGO Committees.
- ☐ During the CND itself, every effort must be made to ensure that the [64th CND web-page](#) is kept up-to-date with the documents which would normally be available – such as participants lists, daily journals, and statements.

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<sup>1</sup> The [Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs \(VNGOC\)](#) is a global Committee of nearly 300 civil society organisations, providing a link between civil society and the Vienna-based UN agencies involved in setting drug policy.

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### THE CND PLENARY

- ☐ For a minimum of two designated representatives from each ECOSOC-registered NGO, online participation should mean having **access to the main meeting platform**. This is the closest available equivalent to physical participation at CND, and includes:
  - An ability to request the chance to make interventions,
  - An ability to see and contribute to any online 'chat' function,
  - An ability to see who else is on the platform, and
  - An ability to converse / private message with other participants.
- ☐ NGO statements remain an important part of the CND proceedings, and must not be limited to pre-recorded videos – although this option should still be made available where needed. NGOs should be able to request to make an intervention during the relevant agenda items, as well as in advance.
- ☐ Given the shortened time of each Plenary session, the Chair should call on civil society speakers in amongst those from Member States and others (as happens at the thematic CND intersessionals). Leaving our important contributions until the end of each agenda item increases the risk that they will not be heard at all.
- ☐ For **all other NGO representatives**, access should be provided to web-casting of all sessions, available in the six official UN languages.
- ☐ To facilitate access for those in settings with limited connectivity, audio and video web-cast options should be made separately available.
- ☐ To allow participants in different time zones to follow the debates, web-casts should also be recorded so they can be watched at a later date. Logistically and financially, this is completely within reason – and will benefit all participants, not just civil society.

### THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (CoW)

- ☐ As a public meeting, civil society must be able to observe the CoW during the 64th CND.
- ☐ The Chair should ensure that the CoW operates as close to normal practice as possible, and does not allow *all* the negotiations and substantive debate to happen in closed, “informal” meetings between Member States.
- ☐ Observers and participants will need access to updated and edited drafts of resolutions as they progress through the CoW (as is the case when physically attending CoW sessions) – through a timely-updated and easily accessible page on the [64th CND web-page](#).

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### OFFICIAL SIDE EVENTS

*The 64th CND will have a rich and diverse programme of online side events, a significant proportion of which will have civil society hosts, co-hosts or speakers.*

- ☐ The CND Secretariat should proactively promote the links to every side event, as well as flyers and other supplementary information, to encourage the participation of Member State officials and others – as well as uploading all of this information to the [64th CND web-page](#).
- ☐ Further, recordings of side events (where these are made available by the event hosts) should be made permanently available on the [64th CND web-page](#) for all participants.

*These recommendations align with, or build upon, the established practices of the CND – in line with [ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31](#) – as well as the positions of the [Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations \(CONGO\)](#), the [UN-Mute Civil Society statement](#),<sup>2</sup> the [Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability \(FOGGS\)](#), and many others.*

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<sup>2</sup> Prepared by the Permanent Mission of Denmark, the Permanent Mission of Costa Rica, the UN Foundation, CIVICUS, Action for Sustainable Development, Global Focus, Action Aid International, and Forus.