Statement of Mr. Esbjoern Hoernberg, Chairperson, Civil Society Task Force for UNGASS 2016 and of the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs, on the occasion of the commemoration of the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

23 June 2016, CND Special Event, Vienna

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Civil Society Task Force for UNGASS 2016 and the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs, I welcome the opportunity to address you today.
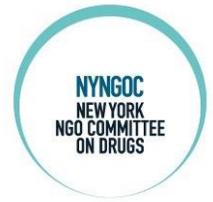
Today I would like to refer to the part of the CSTF in the UNGASS process and the role civil society could play in the implementation of the UNGASS outcome document within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As you know, the CSTF served as official liaison between the United Nations and civil society in the preparatory process of and at the UNGASS. Our objective has been to ensure a comprehensive, structured, meaningful and balanced participation of civil society during this process. Based on feedback we have received, we have been successful. A report on CSTF activities has been prepared, the short version of which is available on the tables at the back of the room. Further information on the CSTF's achievements is available on our web site[1]. Moreover, the CSTF is currently conducting a civil society evaluation of its activities, the results of which will be shared with you in due course.

We welcome the recognition of civil society as a partner in the implementation of the operational recommendations included in the UNGASS outcome document. This in particular at national level where grass roots experience and expertise can go a long way in contributing to the success of effective drug policies covering the entire continuum of care (prevention, early intervention, harm reduction, treatment, recovery, rehabilitation, social reintegration, and access to controlled medicines for the relief of pain and suffering).

Furthermore, civil society can make a significant contribution to understanding to which extent some drug policies work better than others in different contexts, and why that is the case for substance use and misuse, illicit trafficking and alternative development. This can be achieved through the use of existent and newly available sets of indicators, such as the SDGs ones. Through on-the-ground research and nurturing existing/fostering new partnerships, civil society can report on what works and what does not. These efforts, complemented by those of other stakeholders, can ensure the much needed evidence base

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[1] www.cstfondrugs.org

for sound drug policies. Different approaches are effective in different contexts. There is no one size fits all.

Underlining all of this is civil society's strong belief that drug policies should fully respect all human rights and fundamental freedoms and protect the health, safety and well-being of individuals, families, vulnerable members of society, communities and society as a whole.

The Agenda 2030 serves as a strong framework for the achievement of these objectives. Drug policies need to be part of comprehensive and integrated strategies, which focus on socio-economic development and environmental sustainability, in particular reducing social and gender inequalities, protecting and promoting the health of all and designing and implementing viable alternative development programs.

Effective partnerships at all levels are the very foundation on which the above can be attained. Civil society is here to serve as a competent and reliable partner and this is only part of civil society's contribution to promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

To conclude, as illustrated by the work of the Civil Society Task Force for UNGASS, civil society stands ready to contribute to the implementation of the UNGASS outcome document by actively fostering the multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder collaboration it calls for, thereby continuing its meaningful engagement in addressing the world drug problem.

Thank you for your attention and I wish you a good summer ahead.