Statement by Vielta Parkhomenko, Coordinator Ukranian Union of People Who Use Drugs at the GPC High-Level Meeting on 11 December 2019, Nairobi, Kenya

The global AIDS Update 2019 shows that the epidemic is changing, in 2018, more than half of all new HIV infections were among key populations. Keeping with the topic of discussion for this panel, what are your thoughts on accountability and action for prevention in 2020 and beyond?

Leadership for me is about mentoring peers and sisterhood. There are many women activists, in politics, in feminism. We are separated by many problems - stigma, lack of information, stereotypes. We have differences in the communities of people who use drugs - stimulants users, patients of OST programs, people in remission. Leadership is to show people that it doesn't matter how much separates us, it is important what unites us. We are united by one dream and goal - a world without violence, stigma and discrimination.

We have powerful self-community organizations in Ukraine, the Ukrainian Union of People Who Use Drugs, the Ukrainian Union of Women Who Use Drugs, the country’s key populations platform, and local organizations, for example Club Eney. We take actions to change repressive laws and ensure the rights of people.

We called for the slogan "do not chase the witches" to get away from punishing people who use drugs! We are not criminals; drug policies make us criminals.

We have the project "WINGS against gender violence" which brings together women from key population communities in Ukraine. The purpose of the project: Implementation of innovative screening for gender-based violence and brief interference with the WINGS methodology in Ukraine. We're planning to create a national women's network against gender-based violence until the end of year. As a result, we have been able to gradually change the situation with anti-violence programs and started a dialogue with local authorities. We have not only provided criticism, but we have a working methodology that does not require many resources.

Our facilitators are called to public and private institutions for assistance, as well as to meetings and roundtables. Our work also reduces the stigma and discrimination against women in key population communities. I'm also member of the Women and Harm Reduction International Network. WHRIN is a global platform to expand harm reduction approaches for women. Uniting different women, from different key population communities, from politics, from society for common goals, missions and resources is the solution for us.

We, people who use drugs, really do many important things to change the situation of stigma, discrimination and violence, change the laws that criminalize us and overcome barriers to accept services of prevention and treatment.

But politicians often don't want to listen us.
There are my thoughts on accountability and actions for prevention by 2020 and beyond.

- We need standards for rehabilitation centers with access to HIV testing and treatment.
- Gender sensitive harm reduction services.
- Access to shelters for women who use drugs in situations of violence, and access to HIV services in shelters.
- We need more condoms, including female condoms, and clean syringes.
- Access to OST programs and ART, high quality medicines for all people who need them.
- Harm reduction programs for people who use new designer drugs and stimulants.
- Support to and strengthening of evidence-based programs against gender-based violence with access for all women in need, including the WINGS methodology on government level.
- Effective innovative education programs in schools for prevention of drug use and HIV.
- Government media programs to reduce the high level of stigma and discrimination that exist in our society.
- Decriminalized drug policies in all countries. Stop violence from police.
- HIV programs across populations: LGBT and sex workers who use drugs.

Key populations must be included in all of these actions. Nothing for us without us.