

5 Meeting of States parties, San José

Transparency measures

Statement by Belgium, coordinator

Thank you, Mr President.

Before giving an update on the implementation of the Article 7 obligations, allow me to say a few words on transparency.

Different definitions and descriptions of transparency are available but the following one is, I think, particularly applicable to this Convention:

Transparency is “the availability of full information required for collaboration, cooperation and collective decision making”. The whole philosophy of our Convention is one of transparency. It creates confidence, it offers an opportunity for mutual cooperation and it guides our work in assuring full implementation.

During the general statements session, and in previous meetings, several States parties stressed the importance of transparency and reporting. We welcome those statements and we are convinced that each and every State party in this room shares this view.

However, it makes the reality of the figures less understandable. How can we explain the continuous decreasing of the yearly reporting rate when we believe in the importance of reporting. There is a discrepancy between the words and the deeds.

We are all convinced of the importance of the initial reports for setting the benchmark against which progress will be measured; however 20 States Parties are late with their initial reports, out of which some for more than three years.

We are all convinced of the importance of the annual updates for measuring the progress of the implementation of the Convention, however only 54 % of the States Parties submitted this annual update.

I let you think about that.

Blaming the figures is easy, finding a remedy is less easy. Why are States parties not submitting their initial report or annual update? There are several possible reasons for that. Let me consider some of them.

Reporting can be a burden for certain States parties with limited resources. We fully understand that. That's why assistance is offered to those States parties. International organizations, civil society, the interim ISU and the coordinator are ready to help them in complying with their Article 7 obligations. Several tools are also available: as the reporting form that has been recommended for

use at the 1MSP and the reporting guide. Both are published on the websites of the Convention and of the UNODA office in Geneva. We invite all States parties to use them.

States parties do not always see the importance of reporting and the opportunities it is offering. As I mentioned in my introduction, transparency is required for collaboration and cooperation. It allows States parties with to express their needs and it throws bridges between donors and those States parties.

Assistance and raising awareness guided our work since the 4MSP in Lusaka. At the same meeting, we proposed a working paper with concrete actions and objectives. Its title was: "Transparency measures and the exchange of information in the context of the Convention: State of play and the way ahead for a better exchange of information" (Ref CCM/MSP/2013/WP4).

So, what happened since the 4MSP?

In collaboration with the interim ISU, we sent on a regular basis letters reminding States parties of reporting obligations and matters of outstanding reports. Let's not forget that reporting is a legal obligation under Article 7 of the Convention.

Assistance has been offered to some States parties and others have been approached to identify their concerns in submitting Article 7 reports.

Looking at the statistics, we should maintain this approach and consider other actions in order to increase the reporting rate. When analyzing the figures, we noticed that a considerable part of States parties that didn't submit their annual update, have no implementation obligations. They should be aware of the fact that even so they have the obligation to submit an annual update. To simplify their task, they have the simplified reporting format available to them.

And although reporting is a legal obligation for all States parties, we should assure that, in the first place, those States parties with implementation obligations submit their reports and maybe focus our efforts on them.

Since the 4MSP we received voluntary reports from Canada and the Democratic Republic of Congo. We warmly welcome this demarche and I encourage other signatories and States not parties to show full transparency on the cluster munitions issue in their country.

The working paper on Transparency also contained actions to raise awareness and increase the quality of the submitted information. It mentioned that the coordinator would identify with the other coordinators the thematic issue that could benefit most from a focused approach. Reporting on Victim Assistance has been chosen for more focused actions.

During the 2014 intersessional meetings, a practical presentation was made during the session on Victim Assistance. In collaboration with CMC, which I'd like to thank for their support, guidelines for an efficient reporting on Victim Assistance were presented. This approach was very useful and will be maintained.

At the same time, we initiated a project for improving the Victim assistance chapter in the reporting guide. I invite States parties reporting on Victim assistance to share their concerns and problems they are facing when submitting their report. This guide is for them and their input is therefore very

important. CMC is delivering inputs from the field. The adapted guide will be available by the end of the year so that it can be used for the submission of the 2014 reports.

Furthermore, a practical workshop will be organized at the 2015 intersessional meetings with affected States parties.

Mr President,

Efforts have been made to increase the reporting rate and to improve the quality of the submitted reports, but huge challenges remain in the view of the 1RC of next year , for example :

- How can we ease the burden of smaller States parties without implementation obligations in complying with their Art 7 obligations?
- How do we approach those States parties that are late with their initial reports? We noticed that in certain case it is very difficult to identify the person of contact for reporting.
- How do we coordinate our work and efforts in this field? Is there need for an informal coordinating group?

Belgium, as coordinator for reporting, will consult with all stakeholders to identify the challenges and possible actions to be addressed at the 1RC. I invite interested States parties and organizations to join in this reflection.

Finally, Mr President,

I tried to keep my intervention positive and constructive, but I cannot end without urging all States parties to comply with their Article 7 obligations and to submit their initial report and annual updates without delay.

Aren't we all convinced of the importance of reporting?

Muchas gracias,

Señor Presidente