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Statement by Manzoor Hasan, UNCAC Coalition Chair UNCAC Implementation Review Group Briefing for NGOs Vienna, Austria, 22nd June 2017

Chair, distinguished delegates:

Good morning.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today and I thank UNODC for its informative presentation this morning.

I am speaking on behalf of UNCAC Coalition, a network of non-governmental organisations around the world committed to advancing effective implementation and monitoring of the UN Convention against Corruption. My name is Manzoor Hasan and I am the Chair of the Coalition. I am also the Executive Director at the Centre for Peace and Justice, BRAC University in Bangladesh.

Within the broad spectrum of civil society groups that are associated with the UNCAC Coalition there has been a huge and diverse range of anti-corruption work over the last 12 months. I will highlight a few areas of particular relevance to your discussions about the review mechanism and about the second review cycle.

One area of our work is to promote transparency and participation in the UNCAC review mechanism and in national level processes as part of our commitment to the success of the mechanism. We believe that without full transparency and multi-stakeholder participation, its potential and legitimacy is greatly diminished. With the second review cycle's coverage of preventive measures in Chapter II – which includes extensive language on transparency and participation – there will be a greater spotlight on those aspects of the review process and it is more important than ever that States Parties ensure consistency.

We know from our work in over 100 countries that the first cycle review process was not consistently transparent or participatory. Some countries lead the way by proactively publishing the full reports of their reviews - 71 have done so to date - and it is now the established norm to allow civil society input – 85 per cent of country visits in the first cycle included sessions with non-governmental stakeholders. Yet others lag behind by failing to publish their full reports and not providing adequate access to country review processes. Even at the IRG meetings, civil society representatives have not been granted observer status – a result which undermines the whole process because of its inconsistency with UNCAC's own principles and rules of procedure but also because of its inconsistency with international human rights standards, with Sustainable Development Goal 16 and with open government standards adopted by many countries.

To assist States Parties in orienting their review process towards transparency and participation, we have made available an UNCAC Review [Transparency Pledge](#), which has been signed by 18 states and more have indicated they will sign up – we invite many more to endorse its simple but essential commitments.

We are also working to support States Parties with another tool. For this year's June IRG meeting, we submitted suggested guidance on [best practice for transparency and participation](#) in the UNCAC review process. This draws on our experience with the UNCAC and other review mechanisms, and is inspired by international standards. We are seeking your feedback and are keen to hear from you on our discussion draft.

The UNCAC review mechanism and UNCAC review process will be the subject of our first panel this morning.

Another part of our work is in the area of asset recovery. The Mechanism is now occupied with reviewing Chapter V and we have formed a Coalition working group of activists working in this area, a group that is considering all aspects of the challenges of asset recovery from the role of financial centres to the process of asset return. Our working group sent a letter to the [expert meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 14-16 February 2017](#), on “the management and disposal of recovered and returned stolen assets” and indeed a Nigerian member of our Coalition also attended that meeting thanks to the commendably inclusive spirit of the Nigerian Government, which we applaud. The Coalition's [letter](#) to the Addis meeting emphasised the need for returned assets to be managed transparently and accountably, in line with UNCAC Article 9, and it urged that they be used for the “meaningful implementation of SDG 16 and to compensate the poorest sections of society most harmed by corruption”.

Accountable asset return will be the subject of another of our panels later this morning.

Many of our Coalition members are also working to contribute to international discussions on the subject of anti-money laundering. We know that the ability to launder the proceeds of corruption is what makes it worth the effort. And yet, as identified by many of our groups, there are glaring loopholes that are not being addressed. An important one is the ability to use shell companies for laundering due to the lack of adequate requirements for beneficial ownership transparency – public registers are needed. Tackling money laundering also means addressing the role of those who facilitate or enable it – including entities in the financial sector and other professionals such as lawyers, accountants, real estate agents, company service providers and purveyors of luxury goods. They should be held to due diligence requirements and robust sanctions should be imposed on professionals found to be implicated in or turning a blind eye to wrongdoing. More effective oversight is needed. We encourage the Conference of States Parties to put a special focus on this area.



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Our final panel event today will concentrate on whether our global standards and review mechanisms are effective in tackling money laundering.

Finally, despite all our efforts – from governments to civil society to business – the UNCAC Review Mechanism cannot make sufficient progress or inspire the transformational change we need on anti-corruption if there is no effective follow-up process on its recommendations. We urge the IRG to add an official process to follow up on country review recommendations, including technical assistance, and that civil society is included in that process. And we strongly request that the IRG ensures that adequate funding and resources are provided for each stage of the review process and in particular for country visits and meaningful engagement with national and local civil society organisations.

In our panels today, we are looking forward to engaging positively with the country delegations, sharing our experiences and presenting our recommendations for a better and stronger UNCAC Review Mechanism in the future.

Thank you.

Manzoor Hasan
Chair, UNCAC Coalition