

UNCAC Coalition Statement
Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties
to the United Nations Convention against Corruption
Plenary session
Tuesday 3 November 2015, St. Petersburg, Russia

Manzoor Hasan, Chair, UNCAC Coalition

Mr President, distinguished delegates,

At the outset I want to convey our deep sadness and commiseration to the families of the victims of the tragic plane accident, and also to the citizens of Russian Federation. As we reached St. Petersburg last weekend the news of this terrible accident came through, and it was again a poignant reminder that we have such a fragile existence.

Mr President, distinguished delegates,

My name is Manzoor Hasan. I am the Executive Director of the South Asian Institute of Advanced Legal & Human Rights Studies (SAILS) in Bangladesh. Today, I address you as the chair of UNCAC Coalition, a network of over 350 public interest organisations in more than 100 countries dedicated to the ratification, implementation and monitoring of UNCAC.

Mr President and distinguished delegates,

I am honoured to be invited to speak and thank the organisers on behalf of the Coalition. The meeting here in St. Petersburg is a timely opportunity to celebrate UNCAC's many achievements since 2003. We are also conscious of the fact that we are facing many existing and new challenges in effectively implementing UNCAC.

UNCAC Coalition believes that the UN Convention is the key international framework for addressing corruption. We also believe that the Conference of States Parties and the subsidiary bodies of this conference can play a crucial role in ensuring that the convention is effective and has impact on the ground. For this reason, we have developed a set of proposals for action at this conference. These are contained in a Coalition statement that is an official submission to this Conference (CAC/COSP/IRG/2015/NGO/4). This statement represents the consensus among 350 organisations worldwide about steps needed to strengthen the fight against corruption.

Many distinguished delegates, yesterday and today, have described very vividly the damaging and cancerous nature of corruption in our respective societies. They have also alluded to the innovative national strategies to tackle this multi-faceted threat. Alas, they also alluded to the fact that the success stories are very few and far between. But let me highlight an UNCAC achievement, which only came about because of the extraordinary collective effort of the States Parties. I am referring to the UNCAC Review Mechanism, which has succeeded beyond expectations, with an encouragingly high level of state and civil society collaboration in the country reviews.

Mr President and distinguished delegates,

The St. Petersburg Conference provides us with an opportunity for consolidation and evaluation of the implementation of UNCAC since the decision taken in Doha in 2009 to initiate an UNCAC review

mechanism with the successful adoption of Resolution 3/1. In 2010 new guidelines were adopted in order to undertake the country reviews. In the first cycle (2010-2015) Chapter III (criminalisation & law enforcement) and Chapter IV (international cooperation) have been covered. We have a lot to learn from the first cycle and we need to use our experience to build on and improve the anti-corruption structures that we all have helped to create.

The St Petersburg CoSP will be significant for a number of reasons, but most notably it provides an opportunity to examine the first cycle of the Review Mechanism in preparation for the second cycle due to begin in 2016. The first cycle has produced impressively detailed and comprehensive country reports with useful findings and recommendations judging from the 50 full reports that we can access so far, and the 107 executive summaries. The Coalition position is very unequivocal - follow-up on these reports is crucial and will strengthen future implementation of UNCAC; otherwise the great effort will have been wasted.

The second cycle should further exploit opportunities to advance the mechanism's good work. In particular, an examination of its terms of reference is in order to create arrangements more in line with international commitments on transparency and participation, especially in light of the level of comfort that a wide spectrum of countries have shown with respect to those obligations. In the second cycle, instead of having to opt in, countries should be requested to indicate if they would like to opt out of those aspects of the review process.

A similar approach should also be applied to meetings of the mechanism's Implementation Review Group and subsidiary bodies, such as the Working Groups. Those meetings should be considered open, but only upon proposal of a group of countries, the body could consider whether there were grounds for closing the meeting and a decision could be made to that effect.

The UNCAC Coalition urges the CoSP to be forthright in its resolutions and constructive and forward looking in its call for greater transparency and participation, particularly in the second cycle of the Review Mechanism. Such an approach can only bolster the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the world community.

Our written statement also covers the chapters of prevention, criminalisation and enforcement and asset recovery of UNCAC. We believe it is essential to "adopt and implement comprehensive access to information legislation....call for the collection of beneficial ownership information through national-level public registers of companies and trusts maintained with updated current information."

In the area of criminalisation and enforcement we urge the conference to "recognize and take effective action against the serious crime of grand corruption and to encourage the exercise of extraterritorial jurisdiction for the prosecution of the same." And last but not least, we have proposals to speed the freezing, confiscation and return of assets. Mr President progress in this area has been lamentably slow. Much more needs to be done.

Mr President and distinguished delegates,
Despite some successes we are still facing challenges that can only be addressed through real commitment of the international community in term of time and resources. Those attending this conference bear a great responsibility and should follow through with bold action! People around the world are calling for change. They are counting on results at this conference this week. The time for action is now.

Thank you Mr President, thank you distinguished delegates.