

**UNCAC CoSP 8**  
**Statement to the general plenary session**  
**by David Banisar, UNCAC Coalition Chair**

17 December 2019

Good evening,

Thank you Mr. president.

I would like to thank you all for still being here so late.

My name is David Banisar. I am chair of the UNCAC Civil Society Coalition of over 100 organisations worldwide, fighting corruption at the international and national level.

I would like to make a few points on the civil society perspective on the fight against corruption.

UNGASS. The Coalition welcomes the efforts of countries that led to the adoption by the UN General Assembly of the resolution of the UNGASS in April 2021. We look forward to the UNGASS and the process leading to a reinvigoration of the UNCAC. As part of this, we urge delegations to remember the crucial role of civil society in the process of fighting corruption.

Review Process. The Coalition remains concerned about the progress of the review process, especially the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle, which is vastly behind schedule. Further, we are especially concerned about the lack of a follow-up process, unlike regional mechanisms. Without this follow-up, there is little incentive or point to adopt recommendations and much time and resources will have been wasted. Finally, civil society needs to be better involved in a substantive manner, rather than the often superficial way it is currently engaged. We should be partners, not window dressing.

Beneficial Ownership. There have been great advances in the past few years on beneficial ownership. We call for all countries to adopt verified open data based beneficial ownership registers to eliminate shady shell corporations and the criminals that hide behind them. We urge the CoSP to eliminate these now. As US Justice Brandeis famously said “Sunshine is the best disinfectant”. Open up the curtains now.

Access to information. Over 60 countries worldwide, including most in this region, have not adopted access to information laws to allow citizens to obtain information and provide oversight on the public institutions that their taxes pay. It is time that countries adopt the measures required by UNCAC Articles 10 and 13 and Article 19 of the ICCPR. Only 30 countries worldwide have adopted comprehensive whistleblower laws as called for in Article 33. This secrecy of information is hiding fraud, waste and mismanagement. Open the curtains now.

Asset Recovery. We call for increased transparency and accountability in the return of stolen assets. It is often too difficult for states to get money back. Civil society has critical role in

ensuring oversight that the money is not lost again and that victims are compensated. This money is essential for achievement of SDGs. We asked the conference to endorse the GFAR principles and the Oslo Statement on Grand Corruption and to ensure their implementation universally.

Civic Space. Civic Space is under threat worldwide. CSOs who fight corruption, promote human rights and bring critical oversight are being limited. This year alone, 50 journalists have been murdered. Here, in this forum, 5 NGOs were banned from attending for unknown reasons by unknown states with no real recourse. If the states are serious about the rule of law, it must start here.

Thank you for your time.