UNCAC CoSP9 – General Discussion

Statement by the UNCAC Coalition (Mathias Huter) 14.12.2021

Mr. President,

Dear Delegates,

Mr. President, Congratulations on your election and thank you to Egypt and the Secretariat for organizing this conference under challenging circumstances.

The UNCAC Coalition is a global network of more than 350 civil society organizations, committed to advancing the monitoring and implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption.

Civil society plays a crucial role in advancing anti-corruption efforts on the global, regional and national level.

Eight non-governmental organizations have received an objection from the same Sate Party and they can thus not participate in this Conference. None of these organizations work in the country that has objected to their participation. As also mentioned by other States Parties: These objections are arbitrary and baseless. This practice of objections hugely reduces space for civil society in UNCAC processes. This use of objections is also contrary to the spirit of the UNCAC which emphasises the role of civil society. Such an exclusion of civil society undermines the effectiveness of the CoSP and of global efforts to combat corruption.

We thus urge that these objections be lifted. While we recognize the value of the Vienna Spirit of Consensus, voting is a tool in the rules of procedure that can be used in such exceptional circumstances.

The recent Pandora Papers have highlighted once again the urgent need for further progress in advancing the transparency of beneficial company owners globally, building on the good practices we see in a number of States Parties.

We ask States to put in place central registries of beneficial owners that are not only accessible to law enforcement but also to the general public. Only free public access to beneficial ownership information facilitates speedy and effective international investigations, and allows civil society organisations and journalists to conduct research on corruption.

To ensure that data is reliable and accurate, verification mechanisms are crucial. We hope that the value of comprehensive beneficial ownership transparency mechanisms to the fight against corruption will be recognized by the Conference.

The Political Declaration against corruption adopted by the UN General Assembly in June provided some important progress on topics such as procurement transparency and beneficial ownership transparency, whistleblower protection and asset recovery. We hope that the resolutions adopted by the Conference will build on this consensus achieved just six months ago, and will not backtrack from what was agreed.

Mr. President,

31 States Parties have signed the UNCAC Coalition’s Transparency Pledge, voluntarily committing to higher levels of transparency and civil society inclusion in the second cycle of the UNCAC implementation review. We invite the other States Parties who are currently undertaking their second cycle review to also join the Pledge.

This year alone, we have already published 15 reports on national UNCAC implementation, produced by civil society organizations, in an effort to contribute to the national reviews and to promote the UNCAC review process as an engine for reforms.

I invite you to consult the close to 30 written submissions the UNCAC Coalition and its membership have made to this Conference, including on challenges and priorities in different regions, and on issues such as

* advancing asset recovery;
* tackling the links between environmental crimes and corruption;
* promoting the rights of victims of corruption to seek and receive redress;
* strengthening the UNCAC implementation review mechanism by making it more transparent, inclusive and effective; and
* advancing follow-up to the UNGASS against corruption.

Finally, I would like to invite the representatives of States Parties to engage in a discussion with us, the civil society representatives present at the Conference. Only if we cooperate will we make meaningful progress in fighting corruption. Without civil society involvement, efforts to advance UNCAC implementation will lose credibility and impact.

So let’s work together.

Thank you!