**Statement by Mathias Huter, UNCAC Coalition, to the UNCAC Implementation Review Group (IRG) Briefing for NGOs**

**on 1 September 2020**

Dear Chair,

Dear Delegates,

Thank you very much to the Secretariat for holding this NGO briefing, despite the challenges posed by Covid-19. I would also like to thank the Secretariat for elaborating on progress being made in the implementation of the Convention and for the opportunity to speak.

My name is Mathias Huter; I am the Managing Director of the UNCAC Coalition, a network of more than 350 civil society groups around the world, committed to advancing the monitoring and implementation of the UNCAC.

I am happy to share that 25 States Parties of the UNCAC have so far signed our Transparency Pledge and committed to a higher level of transparency and civil society inclusion in the UNCAC review process, including to the voluntary publication of the self-assessment checklist and the full country report. We call on other states to join the pledge and implement its principles.

There continues to be very strong interest from civil society to be involved in and contribute to the UNCAC review process. The UNCAC Coalition is currently supporting a dozen civil society organisations that are working on parallel reports to assess the UNCAC implementation in their country to inform the review process, and we are planning to continue this support in the coming years.

**Transparency and inclusiveness of the UNCAC review process**

We hear from many of our member organisations that COVID-19 is making it even more difficult for civil society to contribute to the review process.

For example, it is good practice to have meetings between the country reviewers and civil society during the country visit of the reviewers. Currently, such visits no longer take place in person. If country visits take place virtually, we would ask States Parties and the Secretariat to facilitate the participation of civil society in this virtual visit.

We also reiterate our suggestion that information available on the country profiles is expanded, in particular, to include up-to-date information on the stage of a review process and information on planned country visits or virtual consultations.

Furthermore, we would ask that contact information for the UNCAC focal point is made available online – it is very difficult for civil society organisations to identify who the focal point is.

Civil society plays a crucial role in the fight against corruption. We thus reiterate our request to States Parties to allow civil society organisations to observe the meetings of UNCAC subsidiary bodies – the IRG and the working groups – and to provide adequate space and opportunities for civil society and other non-state stakeholders to contribute to anti-corruption efforts.

While we appreciate hearing from the Secretariat that in almost all of the reviews conducted in the second cycle non-state actors have been involved. Based on information provided by our member organisations, however, we understand that civil society organisations and NGOs are often not invited to participate in the review process. This shows that more efforts are needed by States Parties to ensure that the review process is transparent and inclusive.

**Voluntary follow-up**

We welcome that several States Parties have voluntarily published follow-up notifications on measures taken after the review process. Having a mandatory follow-up would, we believe, help improve the review process and advance the implementation of the Convention.

We have seen a great variety in the approach States have taken in their voluntary follow-up information, and in the level of detail they provide. We would encourage the Secretariat to develop a reporting template in order to help streamline and guide these follow-ups, including with sections to respond to recommendations made in the completed cycles.

To conclude, I would like to ask the Secretariat:

– How do you see the Covid-19 Crisis impacting the ability of civil society to contribute to the review process? Do you expect that the crisis will result in further substantial delays in the review process?

– Are there any plans to facilitate civil society contributions to the review process in times of COVID-19, for example, through virtual meetings with the reviewers?

Thank you!