**Written Contributions**

**Regarding the Review Process of the UN Human Rights Treaty Body System**

Republic of Korea, 7 July 2020

1. The Republic of Korea places great value on human rights treaties constituting a normative foundation which has been agreed upon at the international level. The treaty body system has served as the very pillar for the safeguarding of human rights around the world. In this regard, we welcome steps for further strengthening and enhancing of the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system taken by treaty bodies themselves, UN secretariat and OHCHR. We believe that effective and efficient treaty bodies will contribute to substantial improvements in human rights situations on the ground through proposing detailed recommendations conducive to legal and policy reforms in countries as well as providing appropriate remedies to victims through individual communications.
2. Resolution 68/268 continues to have direct relevance in terms of guiding the 2020 review process so the formula agreed upon in the resolution should be maintained. We support the various measures in line with the resolution 68/268 and reaffirm our commitment to actively engage in the review process. Given that, we disagree on backsliding or reopening treaties. The review process should proceed under the current normative framework.
3. It is our view that there is a call for a realistic and practical approach to expedite the 2020 review process. We support expanded application of the measures in accordance with Resolution 68/268, the feasibility and effectiveness of which have already been demonstrated. They include the expansion of simplified reporting procedure and consultations among chairs of committees and the coordination on lists of issues, and alignment of the treaty bodies working methods such as establishing stricter word limits and adopting common core document.
4. In light of review schedule, predictability is crucial and deeply correlated to increasing efficiency and effectiveness. We welcome that the Human Rights Committee reviews countries on a predictable cycle and the Covenant Committees seek to synchronize the timing of the review in this regard. A coordinated schedule of country reviews in accordance with fixed cycles can be applied to other committees, e.g. the Covenant Committees on an 8-year cycle and the Convention Committees on a 4-year cycle. The aim of this measure is clear – reducing the backlog in the consideration of State Parties reports, ensuring interactive and constructive dialogue between State Parties and Committees and yielding more targeted and implementable recommendations.
5. Coherence in the treaty body system is also critical. The Committees have their own respective mandates and practices and, as indicated in the Third report of Secretary-General, the operation of the treaty body system is continuously evolving. However, working methods of the Committees should be aligned and harmonized so that they can indeed serve to further protect and promote human rights as a system. We therefore support on the strengthened role of the meeting of the Chairs of the Committees. Since the adoption of Resolution 68/268, the annual meeting of the Chairs has coordinated working methods and it has in fact made good progress – providing the format of dialogues for the consideration of reports and the format of concluding observations. With a view to maximizing the overall coherence of the system, we encourage the Committees to continue to discuss good practices in relation to working methods and procedural matters.
6. Broad accessibility should be guaranteed both on-line and off-line. We welcome Resolution 73/162 which decided to provide, as of 2020, live webcasts and video archives of relevant meetings of the treaty bodies in this regard. We also support the consideration of reports via videoconference to facilitate wider participation in dialogues, especially for least developed countries. We believe technical challenges such as quality of the connection and digital capacity-building should be duly reviewed and supported by the international community with a view to closing the digital gap.
7. We should pay more attention to accessibility for persons with disabilities. We remain concerned by limited accessibility for persons with disabilities to the treaty body system. Provisions for accessibility for persons with disabilities are currently extended only to the formal meetings of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and reasonable accommodation for the participation of experts and stakeholders with disabilities is provided on an ad hoc basis in the case of other Committees. In the area of sign-language interpretation and captioning, some steps have been taken, but much more needs to be done in both the physical and digital spheres to ensure full and effective participation. We believe that information and communication technology can help address accessibility challenges for persons with disabilities in this regard.
8. We also need to pursue creative ways to use new and emerging technologies. In fact, this is now imperative in the midst of the COVID-10 pandemic and the resultant cancellation of recent in-person treaty body sessions. This can in fact prove to be an opportunity to further enhance the work of treaty bodies if we are able to address the need for interpretation and other challenges. The digital shift from paper-based processing can increase efficiency in the review of state parties’ reports as well as in the individual communication procedures. It may also serve to draw even more active engagement from civil society and government officials. We look forward to the strengthening of the accessibility and efficiency of treaty bodies through adopting of better digital tools.
9. We believe the participation of civil society and national human rights institutions (NHRIs) is essential to ensure the transparency, visibility, and effectiveness of the treaty bodies. Inclusive and open consultations with NGOs and other relevant stakeholders should also be promoted. For wider participation and better interactive dialogues, such private meetings between member of the Committees and stakeholders may be conducted by videoconference.
10. In the 2020 review process, transparency and inclusiveness should be guiding principle, even though the process is an inter-governmental process. The recommendations of other stakeholders, including the treaty bodies themselves, UN agencies, academic experts, and civil society, have their own value and merit, and they should be duly taken into account in the decision-making process. /end/