

Statement CCPR-Centre side-event 18 December COSP

- We started working on corruption and human rights in 2017. One of the first big activities we did, was carrying out **research**, to see how corruption was addressed by the TBs at that time. This allowed us to evaluate what the advantages were of that approach and if there were any gaps that could be filled. The result was our research publication, that covered the ten years between 2007 and 2017, and looked at all the Concluding Observations adopted by all the Treaty Bodies in that period. There are no hard copies available of this research, but it is available electronically. This is a small overview of our **conclusion**, to show what the findings were in 2017.
 - The TBs did **not have a systematic** manner to approach corruption: the wording of recommendations was inconsistent and it was not mentioned consequently. For example, the HR Committee would be concerned about corruption country A, and not in country B, even though their situations were very comparable.
 - Recommendations were often **vague**: Combat corruption, eradicate corruption, without making it more concrete or breaking it down into smaller steps that would make it easier for States to implement, and for civil society to monitor progress.
 - Most TBs raised corruption **through one angle**. For example, for the HRCtee, this was corruption in the judiciary, linking it to the right to a fair trial. For the CESCR, it was how corruption generally inhibits the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, including the provision of public services. CRC was primarily concerned about the impact of corruption on the allocation of resources to child-related issues. Often, these are the situations where the link between corruption and human rights is the most obvious, even though, as we know, corruption inhibits more human rights than those obviously linked to it.
 - There were **disparities** between the TBs. Some TBs had a more systematic approach than others, CESCR for example mentioned corruption in almost half of the Cobs it adopted, however CED for example did not mention corruption in any of the Cobs it adopted between 2007 and 2017.

- However, since 2018, we have already seen a **lot of change** and improvements. Some examples:
 - The Treaty Bodies, and in particular the Human Rights Committee, have started to address corruption **more systematically, and more comprehensively**. We now see more concerns that address corruption holistically, touching upon more than just one human right. For example, the HRCtee now also links it to the management of natural resources, the right to participate in public affairs, non-discrimination, forced labour, etc..
 - Recommendations have also become **more concrete**.

- But, in order for this **trend to continue** and grow even more, we need civil society reports on corruption. Members of the Treaty Bodies have told us that it is hard for them to make recommendations on corruption and its

negative enjoyment on human rights, when they have received no reports on the issue. That is why the Centre, together with the Geneva Academy and OHCHR, with support from OSF and the Swiss, has developed a **guide for anti-corruption experts** to better use the UN human rights mechanisms. I want to give 2 examples where the influence and impact of anti-corruption organisations is very clear:

- **Uzbekistan** is an example that shows how reporting on corruption by civil society is so crucial. We supported an alternative thematic report on corruption on Uzbekistan to the HR Committee, and the HR Committee put corruption as the second issue in Uzbekistan's list of issues, asking the State party which measures have been taken to eradicate corruption. The fact that it is the second issue, shows the importance of the question.
 - For **Equatorial Guinea**, we also supported a local partner in submitting a thematic report on corruption for the review. As a result, the concerns and recommendations on corruption were selected as a priority issue. This means that within 2 years of the review, the State has to submit a follow-up report, saying what it has done to implement the 3 priority recommendations, after which the Committee evaluates the progress made.
 - These changes are very important, and we would like this **trend to continue**. That is why we want to empower civil society and the anti-corruption community to incorporate a rights-based approach when reporting to the UN human rights mechanisms.
- There are French and English hard copies of the guide available. A word on the **purpose and content** of the guide:
- It is a practical and **user-friendly tool**, that should help anti-corruption groups navigate the human rights mechanisms. It explores how a human rights based approach, focusing on victims of corruption and State responsibility, can be used to complement and strengthen anti-corruption efforts, and wants to reinforce the link between NGOs working on anti-corruption, that usually focus more on the UNCAC system, and the TBs.
 - To this end, the guide focuses primarily on how UN human rights mechanisms can be better used to report on corruption, and it provides guidance and practical recommendations on effectively integrating human rights into anti-corruption efforts.
 - The guide begins by explaining the **link between corruption and human rights**, and in what way, acts of corruption can lead to human rights violations. The guide is structured in a way that it gives an overview of the link between corruption and several specific human rights, like right to life, freedom from torture or economic, social and cultural rights.
 - It then moves on to give an **overview of the UN Human Rights mechanisms**, the charter based and treaty based mechanisms. Every mechanism has a chapter that clearly states how civil society can engage with these mechanisms and what role they can play.
 - Lastly, media, civil society and NGOs have been instrumental in uncovering and reporting on corruption. But, ensuring the

involvement of those actors requires **appropriate legal safeguards**. Human rights protection is indispensable in establishing that, and thus may encourage journalists, activists, experts, victims and witnesses to come forward and “blow the whistle”. A chapter of the guide is devoted to this protection.

- The guide is also accompanied by information sheets and **Frequently Asked Questions**, about the participation with these mechanisms. These are even more practical in nature and we hope they can encourage you to engage with the Human Rights mechanisms.
- To end, for those who would like to find out more, we have planned **two trainings**: one for organisations from the MENA region this afternoon, and one that is open to everybody, on Thursday morning, both in the NGO lounge. Thank you.