

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on Strengthening the United Nations Human Rights Treaty Body System

31 August 2012

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (the Committee) welcomes the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on ‘Strengthening the United Nations Human Rights Treaty Body System’ published in June 2012, and expresses appreciation for the efforts of the High Commissioner in this regard. The report identifies a comprehensive range of recommendations aimed at strengthening the treaty body system, based on a thorough three-year long consultation process. The Committee believes that efforts to strengthen the treaty body system, including through adequate resourcing, are necessary for the on-going support of the system, to build on its past achievements, and to ensure that the rights enshrined in the treaties are enjoyed globally.

Having reviewed and discussed the High Commissioner’s report, the Committee provides the following initial response to the recommendations contained therein.

1. The Committee supports the proposal to establish a Comprehensive Reporting Calendar, while underlining the need to ensure adequate financial and human resources as a prerequisite to the introduction of such a Calendar. The Committee looks forward to discussing the proposal further, including in relation to the transition period preceding its introduction, and the impact of the calendar on the work load and the working methods of the Committee.
2. The Committee notes with interest the proposal for the Simplified Reporting Procedure, and observes that it has already adopted measures to simplify the reporting procedure through the use of treaty-specific guidelines and the List of Themes. The Committee indicates its willingness to evaluate the quality of reports submitted in accordance with harmonized guidelines, including the Common Core Documents and treaty-specific documents.
3. The Committee considers that strict adherence to page limitations is important and in line with its current practice.
4. The Committee notes with interest the proposal for an aligned methodology for constructive dialogue between States parties and treaty bodies, and highlights that it is already implementing many aspects of this proposal. The Committee will consider further the proposal to establish country task forces and to introduce strict limitations on the number and length of interventions by members. The Committee has reservations about limiting the length of States parties’ opening statements beyond its current practice.

5. The Committee will consider further the recommendation to reduce translation of summary records, stressing at the same time the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity as enshrined in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.
6. The Committee welcomes the recommendation to adopt short, focused and concrete concluding observations, highlighting the efforts it has already taken in this regard and endeavouring to continue this work.
7. The Committee welcomes the recommendation to further institutionalize its engagement with United Nations entities and civil society organizations. With regard to National Human Rights Institutions, the Committee highlights that it has already institutionalized its engagement through the amendment of its Rules of Procedure in 2007. The Committee underlines the need to maintain flexibility with regard to meetings with civil society organizations. In particular, it will continue its practice of holding meetings with civil society organizations in public to promote transparency, but also in closed meetings when necessary or appropriate.
8. The Committee highlights the importance of its follow-up procedure to concluding observations and notes the improvements to its procedure currently being undertaken.
9. The Committee highlights the advances it has made in improving procedural matters relating to the handling and the follow-up of individual communications and expresses its willingness to work further in this direction.
10. The Committee welcomes the proposal of making itself available to parties to a case under its individual complaints procedure with a view to reaching a friendly settlement of the matter.
11. The Committee strongly supports the independence and impartiality of its members in all of its activities and practices in accordance with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and its General Recommendation No.9 on the independence of experts adopted at its thirty-eighth session in 1990.