Thank you Mr. Chair,

First of all, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for Mr. Yigezu, the Rapporteur on this topic, to prepare this truly excellent progress report. As the Chairperson of the Drafting Group, I also thank the members of the Group for their contribution to preparation of the report, including participation in the International Symposium held in last June in Vatican, as mentioned in paragraph 13 of the report. Taking this opportunity, I repeat our gratitude to the Nippon Foundation for their exceptional support for our work.

I would like to remind you of the fact that the document, implementation of which we are now discussed was a product of our Committee’s work. The Principles and Guidelines have been endorsed by the General Assembly already in 2010. The resolution 65/251 encouraged Governments, relevant international organizations and national human rights institution to give due consideration to the Principles and Guidelines. During five years after the adoption, however, no significant follow-up had been undertaken. In this context, it was highly welcome for the Human Rights Council to refer back to the Committee by its Resolution 29/15.

Overall assessment in the report on the situation of implementation was, so regrettably, negative. The report demonstrates that, in almost all states surveyed, the systems of implementation are not established; neither national strategy nor coordination center.

[In this context, I refer to the fact that, Japan provides most cases of best practices among the countries surveyed. But even there the process has not yet finished. In last May, the College of Justices of the Supreme Court of Japan formally apologized their “discriminatory position” against patients of leprosy. The Court had permitted change of the places for cross-examination outside of the courts’ sites almost automatically in the cases that patients of leprosy were defendants. The College of Justices has admitted that in 1960 at latest such practice had been without reason. A half a century has passed for this expression of apology.]

The most regrettable is the small number of governmental responses to the questionnaire issued by the Committee. Only 11 States respond. Majority of responses from States came from leprosy non-endemic countries. Although great amount of contribution from NGOs made the report well-informed, governmental silence itself indicates unsatisfactory situation of implementation of the Principle and Guidelines.

The key of implementation, as the report clearly demonstrates, is participation and involvement of leprosy-affected people themselves. It might seem that the Principles and Guideline was simple extension of already established human rights for all. The document is, however, a direct reflection severe experience of the leprosy-affected people. They have been denied to have a family, denied access to public and social life of the community, and deprived of their dignity. So they have to assert their right to dignity, right to citizenship, right to have a family. To read the Principles and Guidelines is nothing else to hear their voices of sorrow and pain. It is our task, rather heavy and far from accomplished task, to proliferate and thus implement the document.

Therefore I fully agree the part of recommendations of the report. The recommendations are so thoroughly reflected, and I would like to add some points to which I think special attention is necessary.

First, I think that, for implementation, awareness-raising is the first and one of the most important steps. In this context, I draw your attention to the special role and responsibility of the leaders, not only political but also religious, as emphasized by the report.

Second, as the report repeatedly refers, participation and involvement of leprosy-affected people is crucial to implementation of the Principles and Guidelines. National bodies in charge of strategy to implement it, should act with participation of, or in close cooperation with current and past patients.

Third, as means of international implementation, I agree that a special procedure mandate specifically addressed to this matter is highly recommended, as stressed in paragraph 87, the last paragraph of the report. It seems for me the best way. But I must say, even in the case where it would not be done, some holistic mechanism should be created. For example, a short term mandate could be given to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to study the situations relating to implementation of the Principle and Guidelines. Anyway, the most important is to ensure the holistic nature of mechanisms specifically treating with discrimination against leprosy-related people.　In addition to the expert mechanism, in the process of the Universal Periodic Review, a kind of standing question and recommendation could be issued to every country under review, relating to the Principles and Guidelines.

Thank you.