In the air between Geneva and Beirut on 4 July 2020

I became a member of the treaty bodies in January 2013, following my election to the CEDAW Committee.

Below is my personal reflection on the 18 questions proposed by the co-facilitators.

1. Prior to resolution 68/268 I had the feeling that TB worked in silos similar to the UN itself having been a staff member for several years, I had the sense of poor coordination and little cooperation.

From 2014 onwards we realized that we are in the same boat and although we were hopeful that some additional resources granted through the resolution will strengthen the System through more robust secretariat support, improved and harmonized working methods, joint efforts on LOIs and LOIPR.

The progress has been relatively slow. However, the meeting of the Chairs over the past few years developed a more coherent approach through their vision paper of 2019.

The TB system can benefit from more rationalization of its work addressing negative overlap and seeking a cumulative impact. A similar rationalization of the Special procedures with its different working groups and the long list of mandate holders will also be beneficial. Just by way of example: the WG on women’s rights in law and practice has been recently renamed WG on discrimination against women and girls. How can a normal stake holder in a remote part of the planet distinguish between this WG and the CEDAW Committee?

2. The biennial report of the SG on the TB system should strive to include a segment on impact of the work of TBs.

3. I have been part of the WGWM for few years and since 2016 I have been advocating for an inter committee WG on WM with the direct involvement of the Secretariat to expediate harmonization.

4. The predictable calendar foreseen by the two covenants can be extended to the other Committees.

5. AN updated Common Core Document is useful for the SP and for the TB system, but we can also work without it. It requires more research into the SP context etc.…The more we simplify the task of SP the more we need to strengthen the capacity of the Secretariat and the experts, in order to have a solid analysis including of the shadow reports from CSOs.

6. A lot of room for improvement of the dialogue with SP

7. I see a greater role for the UN in-country team in assessing COBs and assisting in implementing the recommendations

8. The engagement with civil society and other stakeholders such as NHRIs is crucial to ensure accountability. It requires in-person interaction and a guarantee of confidentiality. It can also benefit from new technologies and remote meetings when the platform is secured for HR defenders.

More capacity to deal with reprisals cases is extremely important especially during the pandemic.

9. An independent study on the impact of the capacity bldg. programme is required to assess objectively if it made a difference in reporting and implementation.

10. On the positive side: a more systematic use of social medias to increase the knowledge about TBs work, its results if public and possible constraints faced. (Twitter handle proposed by the ICCPR),

However when it comes to ITC for remote meetings, many flags have to be raised also because of the digital divide between countries, the persons with special needs, the requirement in certain aspects of our work for total confidentiality, the need to protect HR activist on line and last but not least the time zones etc.…

11. Having regional reviews could be very useful provided it is held under UN auspices to ensure impartiality of the process. UN Economic and Social Commissions could be a venue as well as Regional Offices of OHCHR. (Proposal shared with ICCPR)

12. Independence and impartiality of experts: A crucial point for the credibility and the functioning of the Human mechanisms overall. This is really something largely in the hands of SP. From our sides as experts a more systematic application of the Addis Abeba guidelines, possibly envisaging a protocol to signal and address any behavior that may lead to a perception of lack of impartiality of any member.

13. Enhancement of the coordinating role of TBs Chairpersons: Very important for helping the system to move forward as well as to act swiftly in times of crisis such as this Covid 19 pandemic. It would benefit from a better flow of information from chairs to their respective Committee and more delegation of authority to the Chairs of the respective Committees.

14.More information sharing with regional monitoring bodies. A step by step plan to achieve more coherence of the TB system starting with a common base of working methods.

15. This a crucial point if we really want to protect the biding instrument that we have spent decades to develop and adopt especially in a time where International law is questioned and the Multilateral system is weakened and the violations of HR are increasing in the name of security and emergency phase.

Closer monitoring by member states of the management of the resources in order to avoid a similar scenario to what we have today.

16. From my experience as member of the CEDAW WG on communications for almost 4 years. The priority is to strengthen the Petition and Urgent Action Section with more staff, to ensure more support inter sessionally to the respective committees to produce and adopt relevant decisions.

17. Accessibility for persons with disabilities……

We still have a lot to do in order to improve the accessibility for persons with disabilities, the recent exceptional on line sessions of the CEDAW Committee proved that much needs to be done in order not to discriminate against members with special needs.

18. The meetings with SP happen every other year for CEDAW, in this particular period, I think they ought to happen more often and horizontal exchange of information from these meetings can contribute to harmonization on the one hand and a better understanding of mutual expectations.

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