



Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of Belgium
in **GENEVA**

Rue de Moillebeau, 58
1209 Genève
Case postale 463 1211 Genève 19
Tél. : +41 22 730 40 00
Fax : +41 22 734 50 79
Courriel : geneva@dipobel.fed.be
www.diplomatie.be/geneva

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M3 2017/ 723

The Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and has the honor to transmit a copy of a joint statement delivered by Belgium on behalf of 39 countries on 13 October 2017 at the Third Committee under Item 72 (a) "Implementation of human rights instruments" of its programme of work (General Assembly Seventy-Second Session). This joint statement relates to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 68/268. It was co-signed by Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Iraq, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The Permanent Representation of Belgium would be grateful to the Office of the High Commissioner to circulate this joint statement to all Treaty Bodies for their perusal.

The Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations and specialized institutions in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 20 December 2017



The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Joint Statement on the UN treaty bodies strengthening process
Third Committee – Item 72 (a) “Implementation of human rights instruments”
General Assembly Seventy-Second Session
13 October 2017

Mr. President,

I am honored to make this statement on behalf of Albania, Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Iraq, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the UK and my own country Belgium regarding the United Nations treaty bodies strengthening process.

Mr. President,

We underline the importance of a sustained implementation of General Assembly resolution 68/268 in the build-up to the 2020 review of the measures taken to enhance the effectiveness of the treaty bodies system. We share the view that this process should be based on the observance of a number of key principles such as inclusivity of all relevant stakeholders, transparency as well as objectivity and non-politicization. The review should aim at, inter alia, strengthening the protection of rights-holders and victims of human rights violations ; preserving the integrity and the independence of the treaty bodies ; as well as reinforcing the implementation of States’ obligations for the benefit of the rights-holders on the ground. All stakeholders – be it States, treaty bodies, OHCHR, national human rights institutions or civil society – should give due consideration to their respective role in this process.

As one of these stakeholders, we remain committed to make full use of the opportunities presented by resolution 68/268 in order to strengthen our engagement with the treaty bodies and the fulfilment of our human rights obligations. While recognizing that late and non-reporting by State parties can affect the effectiveness of the treaty body system, we encourage all State parties to submit their initial and periodic reports in a timely fashion.

We welcome the report of the treaty bodies’ Chairs on their 29th meeting, which highlights key achievements and challenges faced by the system towards the enhancement of its effective functioning. We also welcome the fact that some achievements have already been made by the treaty bodies on some aspects of the strengthening process and we acknowledge the crucial role of the Chairs to mainstream the implementation of GA resolution 68/268 across the system, including on the alignment of their working methods. We also note with interest the four new work streams launched by the Chairs for further harmonization, namely regarding follow-up on concluding observations and views, inquiry procedures, remedies and reprisals.

On the latter, we express our deep concerns about all reprisals against individuals cooperating with the treaty bodies and we welcome the Chairs’ strong interest to coordinate and cooperate with Assistant Secretary-General Andrew Gilmour in responding to such reprisals. We further note with appreciation the Chairs’ recommendation that all treaty bodies endorse and ensure the implementation of the San Jose Guidelines.

Despite progress, the alignment of working methods is an area where more should be done in order to replicate good practices in a more systematic way. A case in point is the simplified reporting procedure. We continue to regret that it is still being implemented only on a pilot basis by several treaty bodies and that the modalities of the simplified reporting procedure vary in the different treaty bodies. While some treaty bodies offer this procedure with certain limitations, others do not set any conditions. Likewise, some treaty bodies limit the number of questions in the list of issues prior to reporting, whereas others set no limits at all. Further efforts, without any backtracking, should therefore be undertaken to harmonize these modalities.

We are also stressing the importance to reflect on the establishment of new effective methods that would allow for the adoption of calendars with a more even distribution of States reporting obligations as well as for the development of synergies with other international human rights bodies.

Finally, we are looking forward to consider the next biennial report of the Secretary-General and the report of the meeting of the Chairs in 2018 as well as the output of the consultation processes led by the Geneva Academy and NGO's, all of which will be instrumental in informing the GA decision-making.

I thank you.