

United States of America
Agenda Item 9: Confidence-Building Measures

Mr. Chairman.

My delegation was, to be frank, disappointed by the discussion of confidence-building measures at the meeting of experts.

We certainly support the points, drawn from that discussion, that you have reflected in your synthesis paper, but we very much wish that we had heard more from States Parties about the challenges and obstacles they encounter in compiling and submitting CBMs, and in reviewing others' submissions.

This is the raw material we need in order to take practical steps to improve participation. We therefore strongly support the proposals of the UK to focus our discussion next year. We can of course discuss exactly what questions should guide our work, but it does seem clear that a more focused agenda would facilitate our work.

In particular, it would be useful to hear from countries that have recently submitted CBMs for the first time, as they will have an invaluable perspective. How did they go about it? What challenges did they encounter? What might have made the process easier? What types of assistance or support would be most helpful? I appeal to such States Parties to consider providing in-depth presentations at next year's meeting of experts.

But there are steps we can take now, and we should take them. In particular:

- We should invite States Parties that are in a position to provide assistance with CBM submission to provide--or in some cases update--information to the ISU about points of contact and assistance available;
- We should request the ISU to ensure that this information is prominently featured on the BWC website, routinely updated, and promoted in the course of their outreach efforts;
- We should reaffirm our support for the development of true electronic CBM system, in line with the decision of the 7th Review Conference; and
- We should welcome voluntary support for CBM translation.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, our report should emphasize that the goal of the CBM process is -- as the NAM spokesman so aptly put it-- "to build trust among States Parties concerning the implementation of the Convention." I might have said "to increase confidence that States Parties are in compliance with their obligations under the Convention" -- but I would have meant essentially the same thing. To achieve that goal,

our efforts should be directed not only at increasing the number of submissions, but also at making CBM data more accessible, more usable, and more relevant.

My delegation agrees with the observations of the Swiss and German delegations -- that political relevance may be an important drivers of participation. But the observation I want to make on this topic is more pragmatic:

There are a number of States Parties who clearly believe that there is a need for serious consideration of substantive questions concerning the CBMs. One lesson of the 7th Review Conference was that any such effort needs a very long run-up: after 18 months of work, the RevCon was only able to agree to a minority of the proposed, relatively minor, changes. So it seems clear to me that this work is going to take place, and it will likely begin soon. Regardless of any debates about the scope of this agenda item, I hope that these States Parties will routinely report to this body on their efforts. I, for one, want to know what's going on.