

Project Title: The Dublin Statement on the Process of Strengthening of the United Nations Human Rights Treaty Body System

Dates: September 2009 – June 2012

Location: Nottingham, Dublin, Geneva, New York

Unit: United Nations and Capacity Building

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Funder(s): Government of Ireland, Department of Foreign Affairs, Human Rights Unit

Summary

The Human Rights Law Centre has participated prominently in the debate on reform of the UN human rights treaty machinery. In February 2006 HRLC hosted an Expert Workshop on Reform of UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies. In January 2007, a special issue of the Human Rights Law Review was dedicated to the subject.

In 2009 the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights signalled through various speeches and comments that a newly invigorated policy-level process of reflection and action on treaty body reform was needed. In September 2009, HRLC Co-Chair Prof. O’Flaherty initiated a reflection process on next steps for reform, with the participation of current and former members of treaty bodies, all acting in a personal capacity. This process led to the Dublin expert meeting (18-19 November 2009), following which the experts issued *The Dublin Statement on the Process of Strengthening of the UN Human Rights Treaty Body System*. The Statement was later presented at the UN Office in Geneva (26 January 2010) and in New York (18 May 2010).

A trail of initiatives and reactions were triggered by the Dublin Statement, including *The Marrakesh Statement on Strengthening the Relationship Between NHRIs and the Human Rights Treaty Body System* (10 June 2010); *The Poznan Statement on the Reforms of the UN Human Rights Treaty Body System* (28-29 September 2010); and a *Response by Non-Governmental Organisations* to the Dublin Statement (November 2010).

The two year consultation process included significant involvement of civil society organisations in *The Seoul Statement on Strengthening the UN Human Rights Treaty Body System* (19-20 April 2012) and *The Pretoria Statement on the Strengthening and Reform of the UN Human Rights Treaty Body System* (20-21 June 2011). This has also been supplemented by three states consultations being held in Sion in May 2011, Geneva in February 2012 and New York in April 2012.

In November 2011, stakeholders reconvened in Dublin and issued the *Dublin II Outcome Document*. The Outcome Document takes into consideration the results of the reflection process since its inception in 2009 and provides a summary of the proposals and recommendations that emerged from all stakeholder consultations who have engaged with the process.

In June 2012, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Navi Pillay published a report entitled *Strengthening the United Nations human rights treaty body system*. The report outlines key recommendations arising from the Dublin Process including the development of a comprehensive reporting calendar, enhancement of

treaty body membership and accessibility as well as enhanced visibility of treaty body meetings through better use of new technologies.

Objectives and Outcomes

The Dublin Process was initiated in response to the calls of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights for reform of the UN treaty body system. It was intended as a policy-driven reflection initiative and is designed to galvanise the reform process. Its first outcome, the Dublin Statement (November 2009) did not present detailed solutions or specific reform outcomes. Instead, it presented a recapitulation of the elements necessary for an effective process of reform, marking out what its authors considered to be key parameters, objectives and methods for such a programme. The Dublin Statement identified what might be termed a “road-map” for a reform that abides by identified standards of good practice. The Dublin Statement was followed by numerous contributions and documents by other stakeholders (see OHCHR website- <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/HRTD/>). The closing chapter of the Dublin Process- the Dublin II Outcome Document (November 2011) – aimed to summarise all concrete recommendations that emerged during the two year consultation process in the spirit of the Dublin Statement principles. It was introduced as a blue-print for the High Commissioner’s own report on the strengthening of the UN human rights treaty body system.

Endorsement

The Dublin Statement was signed by 35 current and former UN treaty body members, with diverse human rights expertise and geographical background. The Dublin II Outcome Document was signed by all ten Chairpersons of Treaty Bodies and endorsed by a large number of experts and NGOs worldwide.

Outreach

The Dublin Statement has been presented in various meetings and conferences (e.g. the 11th Annual Conference of the Association of Human Rights Institutes) and published in human rights journals such as the *Netherlands Quarterly for Human Rights* (Vol. 28/1, 2010) and the *Human Rights Law Review* (Vol. 10/2, 2010).

The Dublin II Outcome Document was presented at the UN in New York in March 2012 at an information event attended by a group of some 130 diplomats and other participants. The launch event was chaired by Ambassador Anne Anderson of Ireland and co-hosted by the governments of Ireland, Switzerland, Republic of Korea, Poland and Morocco.