

ISHR statement: Third Committee – CSO conversation3rd February, 2020

Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak and to the Chair of the Committee for convening this important exchange.

The International Service for Human Rights works to support human rights defenders and for an effective international human rights system. We've engaged regularly at the Third Committee for the last 20 years.

ISHR welcomes agreement reached on a range of issues during the last third committee session. Now however, the hard work commences: ensuring implementation of the commitments made. Systems and structures at national level should enable this, but we know implementation is frequently woefully lacking. How can the Third Committee itself encourage implementation?

We'd like to share five brief ideas:

1. Build a focus on implementation over several resolutions:

The last two Third Committee resolutions on human rights defenders have brought implementation to the fore. The first resolution called for examples of good practice and an audit of UN work considering the implementation of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. Building on this, last year's resolution focused on effective protection policy, providing elements of a road map on implementation.

We've seen payoffs. The call for a Security General's report on the UN's work contributed to encourage a recent UN-led initiative to garner ideas on how the UN can better promote and protect civil space. The resolution provided encouragement to that process. We hope the focus on effective implementation continues in these resolutions.

2. Make resolutions as action orientated as possible:

The Human Rights Council resolution on combating religious intolerance is a good example of this. Its built-in action plan - which lends itself to implementation - inspired the stand-alone Istanbul process. This encourages regular cross-regional dialogue on combating religious intolerance, and of course is regularly cited by the Third Committee.

3. Provide benchmarks to facilitate monitoring of progress on implementation:

Look to the Human Rights Council's approach on Myanmar, requesting the Special Rapporteur to "work with Myanmar to identify benchmarks for progress". This led to the development of specific reform benchmarks and the Council later called on Myanmar to work with the Special Rapporteur to develop a work plan and time frame for their swift implementation. Whilst subsequent crises overtook these efforts, the model remains sound.

Ultimately, all resolutions should include reference to means of implementation in the text.

4. Welcome advances made:

Recent ISHR research shows that where resolutions welcome advances made, this can act as an encouragement to individuals involved in and responsible for implementing commitments. This can be critical where they may be lone or isolated voices pushing for such change at national level.

5. Strengthen and diversify ownership of resolutions:

States that lead on and co-sponsor resolutions, in particular, should employ every opportunity to encourage implementation with third States. This would include through modelling good practice themselves, and voluntarily and regularly reporting on progress made. In addition, States that lead on resolutions should continue actively working to diversify core groups and co-sponsorship groups. This can help to bring in diverse perspectives on challenges with implementation as well as means to address them.

Finally, effective implementation is particularly pertinent when a situation under discussion is grave. In these cases, the Third Committee must follow up expressions of concern with clear and categorical calls for immediate action.

Thank you Mr. Chair.