

VERTIC statement on
‘Development of the guide to completing Article 7 reports’
Intersessional Meeting of the General Status and Operation of the Convention
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VERTIC welcomes any comments or suggestions on the draft which is available on VERTIC’s website at www.vertic.org/research/guide/guide.html

Thank you Co-Chair. I am very pleased to be called upon to present VERTIC’s draft guide to reporting under Article 7 of the Ottawa Convention. This guide was distributed during yesterday’s meeting. There are further copies available on the tables outside.

For those in the meeting who aren’t aware of VERTIC and our mandate, I’d like to make a brief statement about our work. VERTIC is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation based in London. Our mission is to promote effective and efficient verification as a means of ensuring confidence in the implementation of international agreements. We have research programmes in a number of arms control and environmental topics, and have been involved in monitoring the implementation of the Ottawa Convention since its entry into force. We have contributed papers to each of the Landmine Monitor reports to date, and have published our own papers on the transparency and compliance aspects of the treaty.

We became involved in the project to complete a guide for States Parties reporting under Article 7 as a result of our paper in the Landmine Monitor 2000 report. In that paper we discussed some general problems being experienced by States Parties, and the UN as depositary, in the implementation of the compliance monitoring aspects of the treaty. We felt that having a guide to assist the state party officers responsible for completing the forms might alleviate some of the problems being experienced. We understand that for some states, some information required to be reported on has simply never been collected and compiled before, while for others there are more procedural problems in reporting, such as where to obtain reporting forms or send the completed reports. We envisaged a guide to assist those officers in creating a routine for collecting the necessary information, as well as advice on where to seek assistance, should this be required. We also hoped that such a guide would prove useful to all states parties, whether they are mine-affected or not. Clearly accurate and timely reporting by all States Parties is in the interests of all.

The ICBL raised the idea of a reporting guide at the Intersessional Meeting on the General Status and Operation of the Convention last September. The co-chairs encouraged the development of such a guide and VERTIC was tasked with doing so. The Government of Belgium generously provided VERTIC with the funding to enable us to complete a draft guide for consideration at today's meeting. VERTIC completed the draft guide with the assistance of researchers from Landmine Action UK. VERTIC received drafting suggestions from States Parties, including Belgium, Canada, and the United Kingdom, and from the Department for Disarmament Affairs and Mine Action Service within the UN system. Helpful comments were also received from the ICBL, ICRC and the Geneva International Centre. VERTIC is grateful for their considered and constructive comments on the draft.

The draft guide is designed to assist States Parties in meeting their legal reporting obligations under Article 7, as well as any voluntary reporting they may wish to make. It aims to promote clear and full reporting, thereby reinforcing the transparency of State Party compliance. The guide illustrates best practice for completing the Article 7 report forms, including recommendations on the type, format and amount of information, which should be provided. The guide should be of use to officials completing the forms and to those assembling the necessary information.

The guide is divided into 3 Parts. Part 1 provides information about the guide itself and on the legal requirements of submitting an initial, baseline report after entry into force for each State Party, and also on the annual reporting requirement.

Part 2 provides assistance in the process of preparing and submitting the reports, providing information on where officials may seek further assistance in obtaining the information required and on seeking assistance for translation into one of the official languages. The procedure for obtaining the report forms and on where to send completed reports is also explained.

Part 3 contains information on actually completing the forms. The forms are reproduced along with italicised annotations as to what information is required and examples of supplementary information that may be included.

The contents page shows recommended annexes that may be included in any final version of the guide, including blank report forms, a list of useful organisations where assistance may be sought and a sample of the letter that States Parties are required to

send to the Secretary-General of the UN notifying him of the submission of the Article 7 report.

We are aware that some of you will have comments and suggestions for refinement or improvement of this draft. Indeed, some of you have already provided such advice to my colleagues and me during this meeting. We are, of course, keen to hear your views and suggestions.

In our consultations on the guide to date, we have endeavoured to incorporate the views of states and other interested organisations. Yet there are, and will be, differing views among States Parties on the extent of information required for Article 7 reporting. It is clearly not the role of an NGO, such as ourselves, to conduct consultations with a view to reaching a consensus document of States Parties.

VERTIC has completed the task that it was assigned and for which it received funding: that is, to complete a draft guide for consideration at today's meeting. Clearly there will be content changes to be made following the consultations at this meeting and beyond. We are well aware that this is only a draft in plain text. Professional formatting and design is required to make this product more user-friendly.

VERTIC is keen to take this project further. We would like to further refine the draft, based in part on further consultation with States Parties and other interested organisations, with a view to creating a final product that truly represents a good model.

It was VERTIC's understanding that a final draft of the guide would be considered at the Third Meeting of States Parties as a tool for assistance in reporting. States Parties will

need to make a decision on how to proceed with the current draft. VERTIC would be happy to discuss with interested states the role that we may play in any further work on the guide.

Thank you very much for your attention. My colleagues and I would be happy to receive any comments or answer any questions you may have on this draft. We will be available throughout the remainder of today's meeting if anyone would like to approach us.

Thank you once again Co-chair.