

Statement of Austria
17 September 2003

Universalization

Austria very much appreciates the work that is being done in the Universalisation contact group. This group has developed into a very efficient mechanism that brings together committed delegations and other interested parties to come up with concrete actions in states that are not yet parties to the convention. We appreciate Canada's very effective coordination and we will continue to work actively on this very important matter. Indeed, universalisation of the convention and of its norm is one of the core objectives especially as we approach the 1st Revconf.

In this context, we would also like to address the issue of NSAs, that has been raised and that is the focus of many discussions at this meeting.

Austria shares the concerns about the use of APLs by NSAs in some parts of the world. This is a very important issue. If we as States Parties consider the use of APLs by states to be unacceptable, we must do the same in the case of NSAs. But it is important to find the right way of how this should be done.

How can we as SP of the Convention best act on this issue? We can, of course, urge NSA to cease using APLs and we can condemn any such use. We have done this consistently in the declarations of MSP and the Draft of the Bangkok declaration also contains a very clear such language.

What else can we do? This is a complicated and for many states very sensitive issue, and we should be very conscious about the repercussions of how we deal with this question. We would therefore argue for a cautious approach that clearly looks at the consequences of how and in what context we deal with use of APLs by NSAs. What are the repercussions for universalisation of the Convention by states that are still outside, what are the repercussions for full implementation of the convention by states parties? We think that it is a good idea that states and other interested parties get together and explore how best to act on this issue. Many of the states and organizations and institutions present in this room would probably be ready to participate in such a discussion. However, we think that this should be done in a process that is clearly outside the framework of the convention.

Inside the framework of the convention, we should deplore any use of APLs, regardless by whom, and should continue to focus as states parties how best to implement the convention ourselves. The discussion in what way the NSA problem should be dealt with should not distract us States Parties from this main obligation, nor should it be used in any way as an argument that states parties would be unable to fully implement their own obligations under the convention.