

29 November 2010

To: All CSD delegates and observers GMFD 2010

From: John K. Bingham. Chair, CSD Steering Committee

Subject : report back on CSD statement to States at GFMD plenary

Attachments: Final CSD Statement, English + Spanish

Fellow delegates and observers of the GFMD Civil Society Days 2010,

As promised, after working late Tuesday night to incorporate changes that were suggested during our last CSD plenary discussion that evening, we presented the final CSD statement to the States at their opening plenary Wednesday morning 10 November. Copies of the full and final text are attached in English and Spanish.

As you know, we were permitted to give a 15 minute presentation only; I think we went 18. In that time, I was able to present, to my count, 87 of the some 109 recommendations in our final statement. I regret that time did not allow for a straight reading of the entire text verbatim.

The additional, comprehensive summary of all principal conclusions and recommendations of our multiple sessions and roundtables, including specific reporting from the three regional roundtables and common space "case studies" on Tuesday afternoon, will be prepared and circulated shortly.

Here is a brief update on the preparation and presentation of our CSD statement to the States.

- The draft statement that we reviewed during the final CSD plenary Tuesday evening

As participants from prior GFMDs might note, this was the first year that the full CSD assembly participated in reviewing its statement during the CSD programme, a goal that we all worked hard to achieve. We wanted to present for all delegates, not only to consider but to actively improve, an actual draft, on paper, in English and Spanish.

The draft was prepared by 8 of the CSD delegates that the International Advisory Committee had designated in advance of the GFMD as a "writing team" that would represent the diversity of civil society participants, including within the parallel PGA event: Jeroen Beirnaert, Cecelia Imaz, Susan Martin, Neha Misra, Padre Flor Maria Rigoni, Ellene Sana, Catherine Tactaquin and me. S. Emilio Alvarez Icaza reviewed and slightly refined the draft as well.

The draft was based on a cut-and-paste and then editing of the conclusions and recommendations in reports that had been received from session rapporteurs by lunchtime Tuesday. Several of the reports included as many as 20 distinct recommendations and/or detailed text, so while there was more than enough to work with for the short statement, all will be presented in the additional comprehensive summary report. If I may again say, thank you, especially to the rapporteurs of the CSD sessions Monday and Tuesday morning, for the speedy reports of each session's principal conclusions and recommendations.

- Amendments that were suggested during the plenary discussion Tuesday evening

I recorded 47 unduplicated suggestions at the plenary for refining the 5-page draft, contributed by some 35 different speakers, about 15 of whom also offered their ideas on paper. Thank you very much for that feedback.

The suggestions were quite clear, thank you everyone. If I may refer to two of the strongest suggestions, and apologize to you for confusion that we had created without realizing: we discovered after the plenary that the references in the draft to the definition of “human development” by the Mexican chair and to alternatives to detention for children were translated differently in Spanish from the English. In fact, in the English draft, the definition of human development referred only to the head of the GFMD organizing team, not the President of the country, and separately, the draft’s point regarding detention was clear that no children should ever be detained. After the very important feedback however, these points were made even more clear in the final English version, with a commitment to take greater care with the Spanish translation across-the-board. I am sorry that we did not catch the problem before or even during our plenary discussion of the draft. Thank you for the particular passion and clarification on those issues! It shows the extreme importance of this open plenary review, which I hope future GFMD processes are able to maintain.

- Review and incorporation of amendments to the final statement

Following our own closing plenary of the CSD and dinner Tuesday night, I convened a meeting to prepare the final draft. 10 CSD delegates participated, principally from the writing team (*): Emilio Alvarez Icaza, Jeroen Beirnaert*, Oscar Chacon*, William Gois*, Cecelia Imaz*, Susan Martin*, Ellene Sana*, Catherine Tactaquin*, Rex Varona and me*.

We worked until just after 1 AM, when the final statement needed to go to the translators. Together we reviewed every suggestion from the plenary session in our notes, memories and the written submissions. We used two rules. First, we kept in mind that our task at the moment was to prepare only a 15 minute statement to the States, not the full report, so not every good idea could possibly be included. Second and most important, we needed to be faithful to the conclusions and recommendations that came from the actual roundtable sessions. This was difficult, especially with several suggestions coming in from individual delegates after the sessions closed (and even in the hallways). Ethically, and as in prior GFMDs, we tried hard to stay with conclusions and recommendations that the rapporteurs had identified as “main” or “principal” in their groups.

Taking a consensus approach, about 20 changes were made to the text, including among others some important fixes that had been suggested on human development, gender, freedom of association and a distinct reference to the Tamaulipas massacre and protection of migrants in transit. Other suggestions were saved for the writing of the additional comprehensive summary report. Then the report was sent to translators and given to S. Emilio to present in the name of all CSD to the States at their opening plenary a few hours later.

- The presentation of the CSD statement to the States Wednesday morning

Originally the plan was for S. Emilio to present an abbreviated form of the statement (that is, 15 minutes worth, or between 3 – 4 pages maximum of the final 5 ¼ page statement) to the States, in Spanish, with a thousand copies of the statement immediately available to all participants in both Spanish and English. As the States plenary began to start however, the copies were not yet in the room and the Spanish translation was not fully reviewed. About 1 minute before the opening, I was asked to present the statement instead, in English. Knowing that I would have to cut the statement by at least a third for the presentation, I grabbed the copy of my draft with the notes from the night before, tried faithfully—and quickly—to make some cuts without losing points that had been emphasized during the plenary review Tuesday, and then stepped up to present the CSD statement at the microphone. I think it went, not perfectly, but well.

Moments later, copies of our full and final statement—amended as I described earlier, and attached here—were available in the central hall, in English and Spanish. For the record, our presentation followed UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanathem Pillay speaking for the UN Secretary General, among only four speakers to the States in that opening plenary. Unlike prior GFMDs, the programme this year—regrettably—did not provide any formal time for questions and answers or other interaction with States participants regarding our statement.

That's the update. Perhaps others from among the 200 CSD delegates and observers present Wednesday morning can report back on the two panels of Common Space that followed immediately within the opening States plenary. I would only suggest that the new Common Space was a vast improvement over the speeches at prior States opening plenaries, and commend civil society panelists Emilio Alvarez Icaza, Najla Chahda, Raul Delgado Wise and Colin Rajah, as well as five or six additional civil society interventions from the floor, for further pushing civil society messages in that space.

Finally, and humbly, I thank you for the honor to have served as Chair of the CSD Steering Committee. I ask your pardon for things that weren't quite perfect this year (or even really screwed up!) and pledge whatever help may be of value to next efforts, next CSD leaders and next year. In that direction, I have asked for and look forward to evaluations by all CSD delegates of the programme this year, and even more important, to the real challenge that we know we have to get to: rigorous assessment of how these CSD recommendations are followed-up—or not—in action.

Adelante!

Respectfully yours,

/John

John K. Bingham
Chair of the Steering Committee
Civil Society Days, GFMD 2010 Mexico