

Marc Groenhuijsen reported:

Agenda item #5 was about the use and application of United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice. The objective of WSV in this respect was to follow through on the results of the Meeting of the Intergovernmental Expert Group Meeting which took place in November 2006 in Vienna. The IEGM had a twofold mandate. It was to create an information gathering instrument on UN standards and norms related primarily to victims issues. And secondly it had to study ways and means to promote the use and application of UN standards and norms in the same area. It has to be noted that all documents on agenda item #5 (including the draft resolution) exclusively dealt with the first part of this mandate: a draft questionnaire, to be circulated among the member states of the UN.

On this item WSV was represented in the plenary session by Marc Groenhuijsen, who made a contribution which is appended to this report.

Canada had proposed a draft resolution. From the point of view of the WSV, the most important operative paragraph in it endorsed the questionnaire as it had been drafted by the IEGM. It turned out that the draft resolution was very controversial. The USA, China and quite a few other member states opposed this idea. They felt the questionnaire to be too long and they argued that there is a persistent "questionnaire-fatigue" within the UN. It took four full days of negotiations to find a compromise solution. Delegates of the most involved countries redrafted the questionnaire then and there; they deleted some questions and rephrased some others. The final product was annexed to the resolution (E/CN.15/2007/L.5). The resolution also could only be agreed on after many changes had been made in the original Canadian draft proposal. The resolution is appended to this report.

The conclusion after participating in the intense debates on item #5 is inevitable: the member states are not willing or ready to prioritize implementing victims' rights as included in the 1985 Declaration. The action is clearly focused on existing UN Conventions, such as the TOC. The inference to be drawn by the UN Liaison Committee might be that this is should only amplify our ambition to work in the direction of a separate UN Convention on victims' rights.