

VERTIC statement

‘VERTIC project to assist states to prepare for implementation of the compliance provisions of the Ottawa Convention’

**Intersessional Standing Committee Meeting
on the General Status and Operation of the Convention**

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CAVEAT – modified version of oral presentation

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Thank you Co-Chair.

VERTIC welcomes this opportunity to contribute to states parties’ continuing discussions on the Article 8 mechanisms for the facilitation and clarification of compliance. VERTIC believes that these mechanisms will serve to further build confidence between treaty parties that the commitments that they have undertaken to abide by are being complied with and that the treaty as a whole is being implemented fairly and effectively.

I am pleased to have this opportunity today to announce a new project by VERTIC to assist states in implementing the Ottawa Convention.

Through this project, VERTIC aims to further raise awareness of the importance of having the Article 8 mechanisms ready for use and to contribute to the debate on how this may be best achieved. The major element of the project will be the production of a guide providing practical suggestions on

how states may wish to prepare for receiving a fact-finding mission under the treaty. VERTIC intends to have the guide completed in time for the Fourth Meeting of States Parties in September this year.

Fact-finding missions are, of course, but one of the treaty procedures available for clarifying compliance. Initiating a request for clarification, or using the good offices of the UN Secretary-General, may lead to a satisfactory resolution of any compliance question. VERTIC understands that states may also wish to conduct bilateral discussions encouraging demonstration of compliance in certain cases. It is to be hoped that compliance with the treaty will be transparently clarified through these other mechanisms so that a fact-finding mission will be rarely, if ever, used.

Nonetheless, as a legitimate treaty procedure, and one which will take some advance planning in order to be conducted efficiently, it is essential that states prepare as early as possible for the possibility of receiving a mission.

Such preparations will themselves have a confidence-building effect. By preparing for receiving a fact-finding mission states may further demonstrate their willingness to comply with all aspects of the treaty—whether or not they're ever likely to be asked to receive a mission.

These preparations need not be onerous. In fact, many states will be able to draw on their experience in implementing verification arrangements for other arms control or disarmament treaties. Those states with less experience in these matters may find the guide particularly useful in stimulating discussions among the relevant government agencies on the implementation of appropriate procedures.

By demonstrating their willingness to be involved in this process, states can also demonstrate the seriousness with which they view full implementation of the treaty.

It is important that states parties also continue to develop their collective mechanisms for rapid deployment of a fact-finding mission should a mission

be mandated, such as the compiling of lists of relevant experts by the UN Secretary-General and the determination of proper procedures for fact-finding missions.

VERTIC's project will build on the efforts already being made by the UN, states parties collectively, individual states and other interested NGOs to prepare for full implementation of Article 8. In particular I refer to the commendable efforts by Canada and the United Kingdom.

Canada has facilitated discussion on this issue over the last two years and presented a paper titled 'Article 8 and the facilitation and clarification of compliance' at the Intersessional meeting of this committee in May last year. This paper, which is available on the GICHD website, considers various procedures that it would be helpful to have in place before Article 8 is used and suggests areas for further work in the Intersessional meeting process.

The United Kingdom is the only state party to have conducted full-scale exercises to receive a fact-finding mission under the treaty. Since the treaty entered into force for the United Kingdom, it has conducted three inspection exercises for the Ottawa Convention. On behalf of VERTIC I observed one of these exercises earlier this week. This experience, combined with ongoing consultation with British officials, will help inform the writing of this guide.

VERTIC will also be consulting as widely as possible in drafting our Article 8 guide and welcomes comments from states parties, international and non-governmental organisations at any stage of our project. We look forward to your cooperation in it.

VERTIC looks forward to contributing to the discussions on how Article 8 may most effectively be implemented. We feel that such discussions are especially pertinent to the treaty implementation process now, as allegations of non-compliance have been raised in treaty fora. It is in the interests of all states parties and the treaty itself that such allegations can be clarified transparently as soon as possible.

Thank you, co-chair, for allowing me the opportunity to make these remarks on this important treaty article.