UN Workshop of Regional and Sub-Regional Courts

20-21 October 2015

Closing remarks by Rod Liddell,

Registrar-elect, European Court of Human Rights

Mr Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It falls to me, speaking on behalf of the Court, to make the closing remarks for this workshop.

Let me say first that we have been very pleased to have you here for these two days, and happy for the Court to play its part in the workshop. As President Spielmann said yesterday morning when he opened the proceedings, the Court has been very much on board as regards this event. And not just this one event, but the very sound idea behind it, of the value for human rights courts, and human rights bodies, to work in common towards the better protection of human rights.

I would stress the word “common” here.

In our mission to uphold and further human rights, we face common challenges in all parts of the world. Our primary focus in this Court is, of course, the European continent, with the 47 States that are bound by the Convention and their combined population of 850 million. During this event, the situations obtaining in other regions and on other continents have been evoked too. Their common features emerge very clearly. As each human rights body responds to the challenges of the day, it does so drawing on standards that are, in essence, common to us all. Our responses are couched in the common language that speaks to every person of dignity, security, freedom, and peace.

I was able to follow some of the discussions yesterday, and have listened with interest to the reports that have just been made by the session rapporteurs. I am sure that the record of the proceedings will become a very useful written source for us all, and as well for many more people associated with or interested in the work of human rights bodies.

If I can pick out one turn of phrase that I especially liked, it is Justice Lenaola’s image of the cookie jar. I think that it would not be wrong to say that the European Court also knows where the cookie jar is, and has gone more than once, in its determination to ensure the dynamic interpretation of the Convention, and its concrete and effective implementation.

While the workshop now comes to its close, there will be further activity here tomorrow, with a meeting of the focal points of the participating institutions. The Court will be present there too, of course, and I look forward to taking this good co-operation further in future.

For now, I wish to say a word of thanks to all those whose preparation has made this workshop possible: to the representatives of the OHCHR, who have worked closely with my colleagues at the Registry these past few months (Liza Sekaggya and Biba Pesut) and who were the driving force behind this event. To all of the speakers, the chairs, and of course to all those who have travelled far to take part in these proceedings. I hope that your time here has been productive, and your experience of this Court informative.

I add a final word of thanks to the interpreters – even with our common language of human rights, we would be in real difficulty without them.

The workshop has reached its end.

What remains now is for me to invite all our guests to join me upstairs in Hearing Room II for a reception, so that we conclude this day on a convivial note.