



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE
UNITED NATIONS | NEW YORK

**STATEMENT BY MR NATHANIEL KHNG,
COUNSELLOR (LEGAL), PERMANENT MISSION OF SINGAPORE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 87, ON
STRENGTHENING AND PROMOTING THE INTERNATIONAL
TREATY FRAMEWORK, SIXTH COMMITTEE,
19 OCTOBER 2023**

1 Singapore aligns itself with the statement that was delivered by Argentina on behalf of the core group of countries for this agenda item. At the outset, my delegation thanks the UN Treaty Section for its continuing outstanding work in promoting good treaty practice amongst Member States and for its excellent work in profiling multilateral treaties for signature, ratification and accession through the recent 2023 Treaty Event. Of note, the BBNJ Agreement, which opened for signature on the second day of the Treaty Event, received more than 80 signatures.

2 The sub-topic for this debate, “Best practices of depositaries of multilateral treaties”, is timely as it follows from, and builds on, the significant work of this Committee in reviewing and amending the regulations to give effect to Article 102 of the UN Charter, particularly, in relation to the registration and publication of treaties. In fact, the resolutions under this agenda item that were negotiated in this Committee and adopted by the General Assembly reflect some of these best practices, and also include some aspirational ones, such as the development of an online treaty registration system to facilitate the submission of treaties for registration.

3 The depositary facilitates the multilateral treaty-making process by performing a variety of important functions, such as custodial functions, communication of key updates to the parties who are users of the depositary, as well as other key administrative duties set out in Article 77 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. My delegation notes that one such best practice among depositaries is the use of technology in promoting greater transparency as well as in carrying out their functions more efficaciously.

4 My delegation believes in the usefulness of leveraging technology as a force multiplier. It would be helpful to draw from the experience of major depositaries of multilateral treaties, such as the UN Secretary-General, through the UN Treaty Section – the largest depositary of multilateral treaties. The sheer volume of treaties managed by the Treaty Section necessitates the use of technology. To this end, the Treaty Section maintains a comprehensive, publicly-accessible webpage, free of charge, with advanced search tools for easy retrieval of information. In this regard, my delegation is pleased to share that we have received positive feedback from colleagues in capital on how the sophisticated search function and interface of the UN Treaty database facilitates the retrieval and search of treaties.

5 Another major depositary in Singapore’s regional context is that of the Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which through the ASEAN Secretariat, functions as the depositary for various ASEAN-related multilateral treaties, not just for the treaties involving the ten ASEAN Member States, but also treaties involving external stakeholders, such as the ASEAN Dialogue Partners. To that end, we note that the ASEAN Secretariat similarly leverages technology in discharging its duties – with all ASEAN instruments made publicly available online, free of charge, in a user-friendly format.

6 Last but not least, my delegation acknowledges that while not every Member State may have the experience of being a depositary, Member States who use, or potentially would use, the services of depositaries can nevertheless contribute towards the efficiency and effectiveness of a depositary. An example, in the case of the United Nations, would be the furnishing of courtesy translations of an agreement in at least one of the working language of the UN to facilitate the registration and publication processes that will be undertaken. My delegation looks forward to hearing, in this debate, the perspectives on the sub-topic of users and potential users of depositaries, in addition to perspectives from the depositary’s point of view. The users’ perspectives would be invaluable in helping depositaries to develop new best practices or enhance their existing best practices.

7 Thank you for your attention.

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