

Check against delivery

Committee against Torture

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Opening Address by

Mahamane Cisse-Gouro, Director
Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Representative of the Secretary General

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Chers membres du Comité,

Chers collègues,

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Au nom du Secrétaire général des Nations Unies, j'ai le plaisir d'ouvrir la soixante-douzième session du Comité contre la torture et de pouvoir accueillir, à nouveau, les membres du Comité à Genève, au Palais Wilson.

Tout d'abord, je souhaiterais adresser mes vives félicitations aux membres du Comité qui ont été réélus lors de la dix-huitième réunion des États parties à la Convention contre la torture qui s'est tenue à Genève le 11 octobre 2021 : Monsieur Liu et Monsieur Tuzmukhamedov. Votre apport aux travaux du Comité pourra ainsi se poursuivre dans le cadre d'un nouveau mandat de quatre ans.

Je me réjouis aussi de rencontrer prochainement les trois nouveaux membres du Comité Monsieur Buchenwald, Madame Maeda et Monsieur Rouwane qui se joindront à nous lors de la session d'avril-mai 2022.

Permettez-moi également de remercier les membres du Comité qui termineront leur mandat à la fin de cette année : Madame Belmir, (doyenne du Comité), qui a marqué de manière indélébile les travaux du

Comité par ses plaidoyers relatifs en particulier à l'administration de la justice et la situation des minorités et des enfants ; Monsieur Rodríguez Pinzón qui a apporté une contribution importante par son expertise en droits de l'homme et droit humanitaire et son expérience du continent américain au sens large du terme ; et enfin, Monsieur Vedel Kessing qui a enrichi le Comité par son expérience de chercheur, de professeur et de membre d'un Mécanisme national de prévention de la torture.

Members of the Committee, ladies and gentlemen,

Over a year and a half into the pandemic, COVID-19 continues to create extreme hardship and risk for millions of people. As the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, stated during the Annual Forum of the Convention Against Torture Initiative, this global health crisis has created unprecedented challenges for the protection of human rights worldwide, including the prohibition of torture. The need to enforce public health regulations frequently resulted in violations of international norms and standards on the use of force. The human rights situation for detainees has been particularly severe, with an escalation of torture and ill-treatment in detention centres by slowing or suspending judicial oversight of these places.

Vigorous monitoring and dialogue with States and others concerned are of critical importance to ensure that human rights are

respected in these circumstances and promising practices are strengthened and expanded. The holding of State party reviews, including in resumed in-person sessions, is a very positive development to that end.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for having ensured business continuity over the last months, despite the many challenges faced since the beginning of the pandemic. In addition to the work accomplished during the Committee online sessions held in July 2020, April 2021 and July 2021, the Committee's Rapporteur on new complaints and interim measures has registered new cases and issued interim measures of protection; the Committee's Rapporteur for follow-up to concluding observations, in consultation with other Committee members, has assessed the information provided by over 20 States parties under the follow-up procedure, while several facts referenced in follow-up communications were echoed in public domain¹; and, the Committee's Rapporteur for follow-up under article 22 and the Rapporteur on reprisals have continued their activities. Moreover, the Committee's Working Group on Individual Communications held its work online. I am pleased to note that in this session you will be

considering five State reports and conducting one review in the absence of a report.

Distinguished experts,

I would now like to highlight some of the work relevant to your mandate, which the OHCHR has been engaged in since your last session.

As you well know, since 2002, the General Assembly resolutions on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, have been calling upon all States to take appropriate effective legislative, administrative, judicial and other measures to prevent and prohibit the production, trade, export, import and use of equipment that is specifically designed to inflict torture or has no practical use other than for the purpose of torture and ill-treatment.² In the same vein, successive Special Rapporteurs on torture have made similar calls, while this Committee has raised the issue with States parties in the framework of its reporting procedure.³

Pursuant to [General Assembly Resolution 73/304](#), of 28 June 2019, the Secretary General has recently established a Group of Governmental

² See General Assembly resolutions 56/143, 57/200, 58/164, 59/182, 60/148, 61/153, 62/148, 63/166, 64/153, 65/205, 66/150 (in which the Assembly addressed import for the first time), 67/161, 68/156, 70/146, 72/163 and 74/143. See also UN Commission on Human Rights, Report of the Special Rapporteur, Theo van Boven, E/CN.4/2005/62, 15 December 2004; Study and report by the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (UN Commission on Human Rights, E/CN.4/2003/69, 13 January 2003).

³ CAT/C/CRI/Q/3, para. 32, CAT/C/CRI/CO/2, para. 15 and CAT/C/ZAF/CO/1, para. 28.

Experts (GGE) – including CAT member Mr. Tuzmukhamedov – with the important task of examining the feasibility, scope of the goods to be included and draft parameters for a range of options to establish common international standards on the matter. The first (private) meeting of the Group took place online on 12-13 October 2021, with OHCHR acting as Secretariat.

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

The 33rd annual meeting of Chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies, conducted under the leadership of the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), took place from 7 to 11 June 2021. It was a timely opportunity for the Chairs to discuss critical issues, and translate their vision into concrete actions in light of the major positive development, which is the report of the co-facilitators on the 2020 treaty body review. Issues under discussion included: (1) the development of a predictable review calendar that maximizes synergies and complementarities across treaty bodies and ensures full reporting compliance, including the possibility of replacing every second review with a focused review; (2) the ongoing harmonization of working methods; and (3) the digital transition, including the use of new technological developments to increase efficiency, transparency and accessibility of the treaty body system.

These are all topics that have been considered in depth at various stages and in different settings and on which action is now expected. In follow-up to the meeting, the Chair of the CRPD and of this year's Chairs meeting, has put on the table comprehensive proposals, in consultation with the CRPD, to be considered by all Committees during their meetings until the end of the year.

OHCHR will continue to support treaty bodies in this critical endeavour for the future of the treaty body system, including by facilitating, if deemed necessary, another meeting of the Chairs, with a view to reaching a consensual way forward on the main issues at hand.

Before giving the floor to Mr. Antti Korkeakivi to facilitate the taking of the oath of office by those members for whom this is the first in-person session and to conduct the elections for Chair and Officers of the Committee, let me conclude by wishing you all the very best for a successful and productive session.

Thank you for the attention.
