



**Statement by Antti Korkeakivi,  
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Representative of the Secretary General**

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Mr. Chairperson,

Distinguished Members of the Committee against Torture,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, I would like to welcome you to the sixty-seventh session of the Committee against Torture.

Your session occurs at a crucial moment for human treaty bodies, as we approach the 2020 review of the treaty body system. This opens new opportunities for fresh ideas to strengthen treaty bodies and their impact for the benefit of rights holders.

At the same time, treaty bodies are confronted with unprecedented challenges to fulfil their mandates. As you know, in her letter dated 30 April 2019, the High Commissioner for Human Rights informed the treaty body Chairpersons about the shortfall in funding and restrictions in the 2019 allocation of the approved funds within the Secretariat, stating that this situation might require cancellation of treaty body sessions scheduled for later this year. This prospect of worrying and unprecedented cuts in meeting time of treaty body prompted strong reactions. The Chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies underscored that rolling back the legal oversight of human rights obligations as a response to the current financial crisis could encourage States to evade their responsibilities by cutting funding even further. They made an urgent call for solutions to ensure the treaty bodies are able to fulfil their functions undiminished. In the same vein, non-governmental organisations, expressed concern that the funding gap is likely to affect the effective delivery of the mandates of human rights mechanisms in 2020 and beyond.

Throughout this spring and summer, the High Commissioner, along with the Secretary-General, has done her utmost to minimize negative impact of the financial cuts on

the treaty body system, and in her letter dated 24 June 2019, the High Commissioner informed the treaty body Chairpersons that the third sessions of treaty bodies in 2019 would indeed take place. Together with the Secretary-General, she will seek to identify a solution that ensures that the planned meetings can proceed with minimal disruptions.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that while the resources for the travel of the treaty body members are being addressed, we still have a critical shortfall in staffing of the Treaties Branch to prepare the documentation for reviews of State party reports and individual complaints. During your session, you will have an opportunity to discuss the financial situation with the relevant OHCHR colleagues in more detail.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you know, the thirty-first annual meeting of the Chairpersons of the treaty bodies took place in New York last month. The meeting focused on progress made in the alignment of working methods and other areas of implementation of Resolution 68/268, and in particular on the General Assembly's review of the treaty body system in 2020.

The Chairpersons met with the Secretary-General who affirmed the importance of the work done by the treaty bodies. He emphasized that it is crucial for human rights and victims around the world that the Committees can count on the necessary support and resources to be able to fulfil their mandates. He also indicated that the 2020 review will be an opportunity for States to fully assume the implications of their responsibilities enshrined in human rights treaties.

I am confident that your Chairperson, Mr. Jens Modvig, will brief you in the course of the session on the key outcomes of the Chairpersons' meeting, including the Chairs' Position

Paper on the future of the treaty body system, as well as on well-attended meeting with Member States.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights has repeatedly highlighted the importance of your work and the need to increase the visibility and impact of the UN human rights mechanisms on the ground. Earlier this month, the OHCHR Global Meeting enabled colleagues from across the Office – field, headquarters and New York – to come together to share stories of their work and learn from each other. The objective of the Global Meeting was to improve the way the Office communicates, addresses inequalities; engages with SDGs, advances economic, social and cultural rights and addresses prevention. It was also a unique opportunity to explore how we can engage better with national level actors to engage with Treaty Bodies and enhance their positive impact for rights holders.

The crucial work of treaty bodies was also addressed by the High Commissioner in her opening statement to the 41<sup>st</sup> session of the Human Rights Council. More specifically, the High Commissioner addressed the issue of the suspected Daesh fighters and their families detained in Syria and Iraq and related States obligations and responsibilities under international law. In that context, the High Commissioner referred to four cases that have been brought to the attention of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and your Committee by the French grandparents of children currently being held in Syria or Iraq. This highlighted the relevance of the individual complaints procedure both in terms of jurisprudential developments and in responding to major present days challenges.

Chairperson, members of the Committee,

In his message on the International Day in support of victims of torture on 26 June, the Secretary-General noted with satisfaction that we are moving towards universal ratification of the UN Convention against Torture, currently ratified by 166 States. He also stated that ensuring that national laws and practices are in line with the Convention is essential for moving the prohibition of torture from principle to practice. My colleagues and I look forward to continuing to work with you towards this goal during this session and beyond.

I wish you a successful and productive session.

Thank you.