

Check against delivery

Committee against Torture

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Opening Address by

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Representative of the Secretary-General

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Distingués membres du Comité,

Chers collègues,

Au nom du Secrétaire général de l'Organisation des Nations Unies, j'ai l'honneur d'ouvrir la quatre-vingt-quatrième session du Comité contre la torture et de vous souhaiter la plus cordiale bienvenue.

Permettez-moi, tout d'abord, d'adresser mes plus sincères félicitations et de souhaiter la bienvenue aux deux nouveaux membres du Comité, Mme Lorena González Pinto, du Guatemala, et M. Moulaye Abdallah Moulaye Abdallah, de la Mauritanie.

Je leur souhaite plein succès dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions.

Je suis convaincu que leur expertise et leur expérience viendront enrichir de manière significative les travaux du Comité.

Mes collègues et moi-même restons pleinement engagés à leur apporter tout le soutien nécessaire dans l'accomplissement de leur mandat.

Le Comité Contre la Torture – faut-il le signaler - occupe une place essentielle dans le système international de protection des droits de l'homme.

Dans un contexte mondial marqué par la multiplication des crises et des conflits armés, son rôle est plus que jamais crucial.

Les travaux du Comité montrent, avec une grande clarté, que des actes de torture et d'autres formes de mauvais traitements continuent d'être commis, tant par certains États que par des groupes armés.

Face à cette réalité, le Comité poursuit ses efforts avec détermination.

À travers l'examen des rapports des États parties, la conduite d'enquêtes et le traitement des communications individuelles, il œuvre à assurer la mise en œuvre effective de la Convention contre la torture.

En parallèle, le Comité s'attache à offrir une évaluation rigoureuse et objective du niveau de mise en œuvre de la Convention.

Aussi, une attention particulière est accordée aux mesures visant à établir la compétence en matière de crime de torture, à prévenir ces actes et à garantir aux victimes un accès effectif à des recours utiles ainsi qu'à des réparations adéquates.

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

Since the 83rd session of the Committee against Torture, held in November 2025, the number of States Parties to the Convention has reached 176, following the accession of Saint Lucia on 12 February 2026. This development brings us one step closer to the universal ratification of this core human rights treaty, a longstanding goal actively promoted and encouraged by the Committee and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in cooperation with relevant partners.

In that connection, and in the context of ongoing efforts to encourage the broadest possible ratification of the core international human rights instruments, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that 2026 marks the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. These anniversaries will provide an important occasion to call upon all States that have not yet done so to consider becoming parties to these Covenants, and to underscore the need for compliance by States Parties with their obligations thereunder. These obligations include the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment enshrined in article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which laid a crucial normative foundation subsequently developed and strengthened by the Convention against Torture.

You will be informed in due course of the events and activities planned to mark this anniversary.

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

I would like to highlight some of the main developments relevant to your work since your last session, including institutional updates and recent publications.

The Special Rapporteur on torture, Ms. Alice Jill Edwards, in her latest report to the Human Rights Council presented a *Charter of Rights of Victims and Survivors of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*,

shaped entirely by the experiences and voices of survivors.¹ The Charter provides a framework for action for States and other actors to strengthen accountability, justice, reparation and rehabilitation. Through this report, the Special Rapporteur seeks to deepen understanding of how torture occurs, its impacts on individuals, families and societies, and the often complex and challenging paths that survivors must navigate in their pursuit of justice and redress. The report also offers practical recommendations and includes an overview of the mandate holder's annual activities.

Also relevant to your work, the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70), the United Nations' largest annual intergovernmental gathering dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women, took place from 9 to 19 March 2026 at United Nations Headquarters in New York. On 9 March 2026, the Commission adopted its agreed conclusions on the priority theme "Ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices, and addressing structural barriers."² For the first time, the agreed conclusions address the issue of the incarceration of women, explicitly referring to "women in detention and imprisonment" and recognizing the links between discriminatory laws, violence against women and girls, and the heightened risk of incarceration. It should also be recalled that, in February this year, your Committee, together with other UN human rights mechanisms, issued a press release urging Member States to take action to strengthen protections for women and girls in criminal justice systems, warning that access to justice, safety and dignity for women deprived of their liberty remains gravely inadequate ahead of the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.³

In a historic development, on 25 March 2026, the General Assembly adopted resolution [A/RES/80/250](#) declaring the trafficking of enslaved Africans and the racialised chattel enslavement of Africans as the gravest crime against humanity. The resolution takes into account the scale, duration, systemic nature, brutality and enduring consequences that continue to structure the lives of all people through racialized regimes of labour, property and capital, and served to display

¹ [A/HRC/6/42](#).

² [See E/CN.6/2026/L.2](#).

³ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2026/02/un-experts-urge-urgent-action-protect-women-prisons-and-curb-over>

that the quest for truth, accountability and reparative justice and for historic atrocities never ceases.⁴

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

The difficult financial situation facing the Organization has a significant impact on the UN human rights machinery, including the human rights treaty bodies, as well as other anti-torture mechanisms that operate outside the treaty body framework. Since last year, we have witnessed deep and painful reductions in the activities of the treaty bodies, as staff and non-staff resources supporting your work have been severely reduced. Unfortunately, the funding situation is unlikely to improve in 2026. These constraints are affecting the ability of the UN human rights machinery to carry out its mandates fully, effectively and in a timely manner.

As you know, in 2025, the Committee against Torture was unable to convene its full three-week July session owing to the Organization's liquidity crisis, and it subsequently lost an additional week of meeting time in November. This led to the postponement of six country reviews and the consideration of 30 individual communications, thereby further exacerbating the already significant delays and backlogs. The present session, initially scheduled for four weeks, had to be reduced to three weeks, in line with the situation faced by other treaty bodies whose meeting time has also been curtailed during their first sessions. Moreover, despite your ongoing efforts to review and enhance the Committee's working methods, the current level of resources makes it impossible to address the existing backlogs of States Parties' reports and individual communications, thus undermining both the effectiveness and the impact of your work.

The situation of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture is equally worrying. The current financial situation has sharply reduced its capacity to undertake field visits.

The UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture has also been severely affected. Last year, it faced a 78 per cent drop in voluntary contributions—falling to USD 2,491,967 - from 21 Member States, the lowest amount in four decades. As a result, the Board of Trustees was compelled to discontinue numerous ongoing projects, cut the average annual grant size by half, and temporarily close the

⁴ See <https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/03/1167199>

emergency funding window to new applicants, among other contingency measures.

The resource situation affecting the Human Rights Council's Special Procedures is similarly grave. A number of mandates of direct relevance to this Committee—including those with a specific focus on torture and ill-treatment, as well as those addressing related issues such as enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention and summary or extrajudicial executions—are experiencing serious constraints that affect their ability to discharge their mandates fully and in a timely manner.

These developments are deeply concerning and highlight the cumulative and increasingly adverse impact of the current financial situation on the broader human rights protection system.

Distingués membres du Comité,

Je souhaite vous dire que nous comprenons pleinement vos inquiétudes face aux difficultés financières actuelles des Nations Unies. Nous savons que cela affecte le fonctionnement des organes chargés des droits de l'homme ainsi que le soutien que le Secrétariat peut leur apporter.

Nous avons travaillé activement pour trouver des solutions afin que les premières sessions prévues en 2026 puissent bien avoir lieu. Nous sommes heureux d'avoir pu les confirmer. Nous sommes conscients que dans votre cas le temps de préparation est court, mais nous espérons que les travaux se dérouleront malgré tout dans de bonnes conditions. Pour le moment, nous ne savons pas encore si les deuxièmes sessions prévues cette année pourront être organisées. Nous vous tiendrons informés dès que nous aurons plus d'informations. Merci pour votre coopération, votre compréhension et votre patience.

Je tiens également à vous assurer que le Bureau, y compris le Haut-Commissaire, continue de souligner l'impact de ces contraintes financières et d'appeler les États Membres à soutenir davantage les activités liées aux droits de l'homme.

Il est important de rappeler que lorsque les mécanismes de protection sont sous-financés — notamment ceux qui luttent contre la torture, surveillent les lieux de détention et aident les victimes — des abus graves peuvent ne pas être traités, et les victimes risquent de ne pas obtenir justice. C'est pourquoi nous renouvelons l'appel du Secrétaire général aux États Membres pour qu'ils versent leurs contributions à temps et en totalité, afin de permettre à l'Organisation de poursuivre son travail essentiel.

Pour conclure, je souhaite remercier le Bureau sortant ainsi que tous les membres du Comité pour leur collaboration avec le Secrétariat.

Je vous souhaite une session réussie et productive.

Merci.