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Committee on Enforced Disappearances
Eighth Session



Opening Address by
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Human Rights Treaties Division

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Chairperson,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I would like to welcome you at this eighth session of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances.

Since the last session, on 15 December 2014, Slovakia ratified the Convention bringing the number of States parties to 44. The slow but steady increase in the number of States parties is of course a matter of satisfaction; however more efforts should be done to **encourage ratification** and highlight the contemporary value of the goals and objectives of the Convention.

Treaty body strengthening

Chairperson,

Distinguished Members,

We will remember 2014 as the year in which the intergovernmental treaty body strengthening exercise came to a successful conclusion with the adoption of General Assembly resolution 68/268. This Committee was at the forefront of supporters for that process, and you can justly share in the credit for its successful conclusion.

At the end of 2014 we unfortunately witnessed a significant cut in OHCHR's extra budgetary resources. This cut affected all parts of the organization and the Human Rights Treaties Division was not spared. In this constrained financial environment, and in line with resolution 68/268, OHCHR will focus its support in 2015 on assisting each committee and reach the targets set out in the resolution in terms of numbers of lists of issues, concluding observations and communications, and reduce the backlogs although the latter is not your case.

Mister Chairperson,

The General Assembly recognized that strengthening the treaty body system requires the increased harmonization of working methods across treaty

bodies. It will make the treaty bodies more accessible to States and stakeholders, and benefit the system as a whole. We salute CED as one of those Committees that lead by example, thereby showing other committees the road to greater efficiency and unity.

We welcome the decisions the Committee has already taken in this regard, such as its decision to reduce the number of working languages to three, with the addition of a fourth one only if necessary and the streamlining of the concluding observations. This also fits the new requirements for States parties to strictly limit the length of their reports. We encourage the Committee to continue to consider adding greater focus to its concluding observations while maintaining their quality.

Implementation of resolution 68/268 also involves tracking our progress, including in the application of the Addis Ababa guidelines. The General Assembly has requested that the Secretary-General submit a report on progress made in the implementation of the resolution every two years. OHCHR has started collecting data and tracking progress specifically for this purpose. The CED may wish to establish an internal mechanism to keep track of its own progresses. All these reports will be used to ensure that the regular budget resources devoted to the committees keep in line with the backlogs of the committees. They will also be used in the next review of the entire treaty body system scheduled under the resolution for 2020.

The CED has displayed leadership in the strengthening process, particularly through the participation of your chair in the meetings of the Chairpersons of treaty bodies. He participated in the informal meeting of Chairpersons held to weeks ago at the margin of the Wilton Park conference. The meeting looked at follow-up by individual committees to the treaty body strengthening resolution, as well as the post-2015 agenda and the important question of reprisals, on which your Chair will undoubtedly brief you during this session.

Post-2015

I would like to take this opportunity to refer to developments in the elaboration of the sustainable development goals within the post-2015 agenda. Since the last session of the Committee the Secretary-General has issued his Synthesis Report which summarizes the process to date, including the draft goals and targets elaborated by the Intergovernmental Open Working Group in 2014. In his report the Secretary-General makes

explicitly calls for a universal, human rights-based post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

During their informal meeting the Chairpersons adopted a joint statement on the post-2015 development agenda in which they strongly urged Member States to maintain - and, indeed, strengthen - consistent alignment with, and references to, human rights. Inter alia, the statement stresses that, in addition to economic and social rights, the inclusion of civil and political rights is a significant step towards a balanced and transformative agenda that addresses freedom from fear along with freedom from want.

Member States are now embarking on negotiations towards a new zero draft of the goals and indicators in May 2015, with the aim to adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda at the UN General Assembly Heads of State Summit in September 2015. This phase is crucial to ensuring that the Post-2015 Development Agenda is grounded in human rights norms, and that the goals and targets themselves are closely aligned with the international human rights treaties, including the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

In concluding these remarks I wish you well for the work ahead of you during the forthcoming, challenging weeks. The High Commissioner, with whom you will have a dialogue and exchange views of the Convention and your work, will reassure you about his commitment and that of his staff to provide the support necessary to accomplish your work not only while you are in Geneva but inter-sessionally as well.

Thank you.