

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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10:00 am
Palais Wilson, 1st floor Conference room

Monsieur le Président,

Chers membres du Comité,

Chers collègues,

Au nom du Secrétaire général des Nations Unies, j'ai le plaisir d'ouvrir la quatre-vingt-unième session du Comité contre la torture et vous souhaite la bienvenue. Le Comité a un [programme de travail](#) chargé et je voudrais commencer par vous souhaiter une session productive et fructueuse.

Alors que nous approchons du point culminant des célébrations marquant le [40^{ème} anniversaire de l'adoption de la Convention contre la torture et autres peines ou traitements cruels, inhumains ou dégradants](#), l'occasion nous est donnée de revenir sur une année remplie d'événements importants visant à promouvoir la prévention et la lutte contre la torture. Grâce à une série d'initiatives conjointes, les parties prenantes ont engagé des débats essentiels pour renforcer le combat contre cette pratique odieuse ainsi que le soutien aux victimes/survivants. Les mécanismes anti-torture des Nations Unies et leurs secrétariats respectifs, sous la houlette du Comité contre la torture et de son secrétariat, ont mené à bien une série d'évènements tout au long de l'année pour mettre en lumière les succès des quatre dernières décennies, encourager les discussions sur les questions émergentes et les défis pressants auxquels le mouvement anti-torture est confronté aujourd'hui, et créer une dynamique favorisant les réformes juridiques et les changements de mentalité nécessaires pour lutter contre la torture à l'échelle mondiale. Les célébrations culmineront avec l'organisation d'un événement de haut niveau à Genève le 14 novembre prochain, soulignant notre engagement à défendre la dignité humaine et à garantir que la Convention demeure une pierre angulaire dans

la lutte globale contre la torture et dans le combat pour la justice et le droit aux réparations pour les victimes.

Mr. Chair,

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

As you well know, the UN treaty body system has been severely impacted by chronic resource constraints, compounded by the ongoing liquidity crisis of the Organization. These challenges prevent your committee and other treaty bodies from fully and effectively carrying out their mandated activities. The resources allocated to the treaty bodies must be increased to reflect the growing number of ratifications, as well as States parties' initial and periodic reports, individual communications, and urgent action requests.

Despite these constraints, the treaty body strengthening process has led to significant results following the adoption of General Assembly resolution [68/268](#). Recently, the Chairs of the treaty bodies have presented unified conclusions on making the system fit for purpose, coherent, and sustainable.

At their thirty-sixth meeting held from 24 to 28 June 2024 in New York, the Chairs made progress in aligning the working methods of the treaty bodies, particularly in relation to the simplified reporting procedure and the proposed advisory mechanism for harmonization.¹ During their meeting with Member States on 26 June, the Chairs urged them to endorse the introduction of a predictable eight-year review schedule, with follow-up reviews in between, as well as other

¹ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/events/meetings/2024/36th-meeting-chairpersons-human-rights-treaty-bodies>

pending proposals for the strengthening of the treaty body system. They also called for resources to implement these proposals.

Since then, the Secretary-General has strongly supported the conclusions of the treaty body Chairs and has called on Member States to support their implementation. In his fifth biennial report on the treaty body system, published in September, the Secretary-General concluded that “resource constraints over the past years pose risks to the effective functioning of the treaty body system in monitoring the compliance of States parties with their international human rights obligations and in providing redress to victims of human rights violations. In addition, non-reporting and underreporting by States parties lead to unpredictability, incoherence and the exclusion of many States from the regular review process, as well as uneven implementation of human rights obligations”.²

In this regard, we welcome the fact that, in the ‘[Pact for the Future](#)’ adopted at the UN Summit of the Future in September, Members States requested the Secretary-General to assess the need for adequate, predictable, increased and sustainable financing of the United Nations human rights mechanisms, including OHCHR, to ensure efficient and effective mandate delivery. Obtaining such resources would enable your Committee and the rest of the UN human rights machinery to respond to the range of human rights challenges facing the international community with impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity.

As the Chair of this Committee rightly noted in his recent address to the Third Committee of the General Assembly at its 79th session, the upcoming GA resolution on the human rights treaty body system presents a crucial opportunity

² [A/79/336](#), para. 77.

for Member States to reaffirm their commitment to strengthening the treaty bodies by addressing existing challenges, including those related to predictability, working methods, and digitalization. Meaningful improvements in these areas can only be achieved through increased and sustainable financing.

Distinguished Committee members,

Also in the context of the current session of the General Assembly, the latest annual report of the Secretary-General on intimidation and reprisals for cooperating with the United Nations ([A/HRC/57/60](#)) indicates that the number of reported acts of intimidation and reprisals by State and non-State actors against individuals or groups seeking to cooperate, or having cooperated, with the United Nations remains high.³ The report reiterates the United Nations' commitment to strengthening its response to such incidents and ensuring that appropriate systems are in place to raise awareness, identify, document, track, and report allegations, and to send clear zero-tolerance messages. These efforts are crucial for publicly supporting safe and meaningful cooperation with the United Nations system. This must be done in close consultation with, and guided by, the needs of those affected. The Secretary-General's report also welcomes the efforts by United Nations entities, in coordination with OHCHR, to develop dedicated protocols or guidelines to prevent and address reprisals.⁴ Notably, the report highlights the preventive measures implemented by the Committee against Torture in response to concerns expressed by civil society actors fearing reprisals for their engagement with the Committee.⁵ Once again, I commend your Committee for its ongoing

³ [A/HRC/57/60](#), para. 112.

⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 131.

⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 9.

attention to these critical issues and for the preventive measures regularly taken to address them.

Lastly, I would also like to draw your attention to the publication of the Secretary-General's report on human rights in the administration of justice ([A/79/296](#)), a topic that is highly relevant to your mandate. The report highlights best practices in applying digital technologies and artificial intelligence within the justice system, as well as the human rights challenges and potential negative impacts these technologies may have on safeguarding rights in criminal justice. This includes the rights to liberty and security, freedom from torture and ill-treatment, and the right to a fair trial by an independent judiciary, particularly when these technologies are unregulated or improperly used.

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

In closing, I would like to reiterate our strong commitment to supporting the Committee against Torture as you carry out your critical mandate during and beyond this anniversary year of the Convention against Torture. I wish you all a successful session.

Thank you.