



Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

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Committee against Torture Sixty-second session

Summary record of the first part (public)* of the 1570th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 6 November 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Modvig

Contents

Opening of the session

Adoption of the agenda

* The summary record of the second part (closed) of the meeting appears as document CAT/C/SR.1570/Add.1.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chair** declared open the sixty-second session of the Committee against Torture.
2. **Mr. David** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in his opening statement to the thirty-sixth session of the Human Rights Council on 11 September 2017, had stressed the fact that the world had become a darker and more dangerous place. At the same time, OHCHR was adopting a more determined approach, given its position that human rights principles were the only way to avoid war and profound misery and deprivation. The following principles contained in the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment remained highly relevant in that context: torture was a crime which was never allowed or justified, not even in time of war or in the fight against terrorism; those who committed the crime of torture would always be held accountable; and victims of torture had the right to rehabilitation and redress. The Committee played an essential role in implementing those principles and its work was enriched by the contributions of States and civil society representatives.
3. An impressive number of initiatives were being taken to combat and prevent torture and ill-treatment. They came at a crucial time when some country's leaders were trying to weaken the anti-torture narrative and protection framework, as noted by the High Commissioner in his address at the Annual Grotius Lecture 2017.
4. The unique State-driven Convention against Torture Initiative (CTI) aimed to achieve universal ratification of the Convention by identifying challenges and barriers to ratification and implementation and addressing them through inter-State cooperation, assistance and dialogue; by providing legal advice and technical assistance to Governments at their request; and by building a global platform composed of States, the United Nations, national and international NGOs and experts to work together to achieve the CTI vision. Since the creation of CTI in March 2014, eight States had ratified the Convention. CTI had also launched a series of implementation and training tools for the Convention based on good State practices. The first tool focused on State strategies to prevent torture and the second on safeguards in police detention. The first training tool focused on investigative interviewing. State party reports and the Committee's concluding observations were an extremely important source of good practices. CTI had also launched a blog series on States parties to the Convention and its Optional Protocol with a view to sharing inspiration and experiences with States contemplating ratification of the two treaties.
5. The Alliance for Torture-Free Trade had been launched in September 2017 by Argentina, the European Union and Mongolia during the high-level week of the seventy-second session of the United Nations General Assembly. The Alliance sought to control and restrict exports of goods used to carry out torture, to monitor trade routes and to exchange information in order to put an end to such trade. The OHCHR Office in New York had been closely associated with the initiative. In October 2017, CTI and the European Union had held a side-event following the launch of the Alliance, which had been attended by representatives of the Committee against Torture and the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, as well as by the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
6. The High Commissioner had addressed another CTI high-level event in the context of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2017 on "Torture during interrogations — illegal, immoral and ineffective". On that occasion, the High Commissioner had announced that OHCHR was planning to produce, in association with the Police Division of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, a manual on investigative interviewing for use by United Nations police officers worldwide. CTI and the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights were also preparing guidance on investigative interviewing that did not rely on threats and brutality.
7. Following the adoption of Human Rights Council resolution 31/31 of 24 March 2016, OHCHR had convened an intersessional seminar on 6 October 2017 on the implementation of effective safeguards to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or

degrading treatment or punishment during police custody and pretrial detention. The event had been preceded by a CTI event on investigative interviewing and had been attended by the Chair of the Committee against Torture.

8. The United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture had decided the previous week to devote its 2018 annual expert workshop to the theme “Access to justice for victims of torture”. The Committee would be closely associated with the event.

9. There was thus strong international support from coalitions of States, NGOs, United Nations human rights mechanisms and OHCHR for action to combat the never-ending practice of torture and all rhetoric seeking to justify it, for instance in the context of the fight against terrorism. The Committee was a key actor whose recommendations, decisions on individual complaints and general comments provided authoritative guidance for international, regional and national stakeholders and for OHCHR.

10. In his statement to the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly on 16 October 2017, the High Commissioner had stressed his determination to do everything in his power to ensure the comprehensive implementation of recommendations issued by all human rights mechanisms. He had referred in particular to support for the establishment of national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up through the Treaty Body Capacity-Building Programme (TBCBP). OHCHR had worked under the programme with Fiji and Sao Tome and Principe, both of which had ratified the Convention against Torture. CTI and OHCHR had worked with the Comoros, which had ratified the Convention, and was now working with Angola and Suriname. The TBCBP team had participated in subregional CTI-led events in Costa Rica, Morocco and the Pacific region on the promotion of universal ratification, reporting and implementation of treaty obligations. The events had led to the submission of reports to the Committee by Mauritius, Panama and South Africa.

11. Turning to General Assembly resolution 68/268 on the strengthening of the treaty body system and preparations for the 2020 review, he said that the Secretary-General’s first report, which was currently being considered by the General Assembly, recommended the reallocation of the meeting time and human resources allotted to each treaty body based on its workload, and a considerable increase in resources allocated to bodies examining individual communications. The Fifth Committee would consider the proposal in the weeks ahead and a decision was expected in December 2017. The Chief of the Human Rights Treaties Branch would shortly spend a week in New York to discuss the resolution with Member States. The Committee might wish to discuss the outcome with him later in the session. On 13 October 2017, a number of Chairs of treaty bodies, including the Chair of the Committee against Torture, had addressed the Third Committee of the General Assembly, underscoring the need for additional resources.

12. Three members were leaving the Committee at the end of the current session: Ms. Pradhan-Malla, who was known, in particular, for her gender expertise; Mr. Zhang, whose wisdom had guided the Committee; and Mr. Bruni, who had spared no effort to share his unique knowledge and his experience as a former Secretary of the Committee.

13. He wished the Committee a fruitful and successful session.

14. **The Chair** said that the intensive action being taken to combat torture was highly encouraging.

15. **Mr. Hani** said that there might be a risk of overlap between the two initiatives mentioned by Mr. David, namely the production of a manual on investigative interviewing by OHCHR and the Police Division of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and the preparation of guidance on investigative interviewing by CTI and the Norwegian Centre on Human Rights. He suggested that the Committee should examine the two initiatives and see how they could be aligned with the recommendations on the same subject issued by the Special Rapporteur on torture.

Adoption of the agenda (CAT/C/62/1)

16. *The agenda was adopted.*

The public part of the meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.