



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

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Committee against Torture Sixty-seventh session

Summary record of the first part (public)* of the 1757th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 22 July 2019, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Modvig

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* The summary record of the second part (closed) of the meeting appears as document CAT/C/SR.1757/Add.1.

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chair** declared open the sixty-seventh session of the Committee against Torture.
2. **Mr. Korkeakivi** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that the session was taking place at a crucial time for human rights treaty bodies, during the run-up to the 2020 review of the treaty body system. While the review would bring new opportunities to strengthen the system and increase its impact, treaty bodies were also facing unprecedented challenges to fulfilling their mandates. The High Commissioner's warning, in a letter dated April 2019, that the funding shortfall might necessitate the cancellation of treaty body sessions, had prompted strong reactions from the Chairs, who had made an urgent call for solutions and stressed that reducing the legal oversight of human rights obligations could encourage States to evade their responsibilities by cutting funding even further. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had also expressed concern about the funding gap and its potential impact on delivery of the mandates of human rights mechanisms. The High Commissioner had since done her utmost to minimize the impact of the cuts and, on 24 June 2019, had confirmed that the third treaty body sessions scheduled for 2019 would indeed take place, and that she would work with the Secretary-General to ensure minimal disruption to planned schedules. However, while resources had been found to cover the travel of Committee members, OHCHR had insufficient staff to prepare the documentation for reviews of State party reports and individual complaints. During the session, the Committee would have the opportunity to discuss the financial situation in more detail with OHCHR representatives.
3. The thirty-first annual meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies had taken place in New York in June 2019. It had focused on progress made in implementing General Assembly resolution 68/268 and on the 2020 review. The Secretary-General had affirmed the importance of the work done by the treaty bodies, emphasizing that the availability of the resources necessary to enable the Committees to fulfil their mandates was crucial for human rights and for victims of abuse throughout the world. He had also indicated that the 2020 review would be an opportunity for States to fully assume the implications of their human rights responsibilities. The Chair of the Committee would be able to brief members on the outcomes of that meeting, including the position paper on the future of the treaty body system and the meeting held with member States.
4. The High Commissioner had repeatedly highlighted the importance of the treaty bodies and the need to increase the visibility of their work on the ground. At the OHCHR Global Meeting in early July 2019, colleagues from around the world had had the opportunity to share stories of their work and learn from each other. The objective had been to improve the way in which OHCHR communicated and dealt with crucial human rights issues. The meeting had also provided a unique opportunity to engage with treaty bodies and enhance their positive impact for rights holders. The High Commissioner had also addressed the work of the treaty bodies in her opening statement at the forty-first session of the Human Rights Council, and specifically the four cases that had been addressed to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee against Torture regarding the detention of the children of suspected Daesh fighters in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq. Those cases highlighted the relevance of the individual communications procedure for jurisprudential developments and as a means to respond to current challenges.
5. On the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, the Secretary-General had welcomed the progress made towards universal ratification of the Convention and had stated that it was essential to bring national laws and practices into line with the Convention in order to make the prohibition of torture a reality. OHCHR looked forward to working with the Committee towards that goal during the session and beyond.
6. **Mr. Hani** said that he welcomed the news that the third session would go ahead as planned and the interest in the Committee's work that the Secretary-General had shown. He wished to know whether the decision to maintain the third session of 2019 for all treaty bodies had been confirmed officially and whether it was currently expected that all three sessions could be held in 2020.

7. **Mr. Korkeakivi** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that OHCHR had found solutions that guaranteed the third session of each treaty body in 2019. However, because the shortfall in staff resources continued to impede the preparation of individual communications, an adjustment of meeting time would need to be discussed. OHCHR hoped to be able to organize all three sessions in 2020, but the financial situation remained challenging for the entire system.

Adoption of the agenda

8. *The agenda was adopted.*

Organizational and other matters

9. **The Chair**, introducing the programme of work for the session, said that the Committee would consider reports submitted by Greece, Poland and Togo and would review the situation of Bangladesh in the absence of an initial report. The national human rights institutions and national preventive mechanisms of Greece, Poland and Togo had accepted invitations to meet with the Committee. The Committee would also consider 11 individual communications and 10 discontinuances. Reports on follow-up under articles 19 and 22 and on reprisals under articles 19, 20 and 22 would be presented by the respective rapporteurs and the Committee would continue its internal thematic discussion on how to structure its dialogue with States. REDRESS, an NGO, would give a thematic briefing on the prohibition of coerced evidence under article 15 of the Convention while he would debrief Committee members on developments related to the 2020 review and the recent meeting of the Chairs held in New York. In that connection, a follow-up meeting was due to be held with the Chief of Programme Support and Management Services of OHCHR.

The public part of the meeting rose at 10.15 a.m.