



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

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## Committee against Torture

### Sixty-sixth session

#### Summary record of the first part (public)\* of the 1720th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 23 April 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.1720/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-sixth session of the Committee against Torture.
2. **Mr. Salama** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)), referring to the opening statement of the Secretary-General at the fortieth session of the Human Rights Council, said that, although the human rights agenda was losing ground in many parts of the globe, powerful movements that championed human rights and justice were also emerging.
3. The United Nations Human Rights Appeal 2019 had marked a shift in the focus of the work of OHCHR towards prevention, which was a central component in the upholding of human rights. Human rights treaties had an important role to play in that regard because they possessed inherent preventive power. Moreover, the work of the treaty bodies served to ensure that States parties upheld international human rights standards by helping them to identify, address and overcome prevention challenges. It was crucial therefore that the treaty body system continued to operate efficiently and to deliver concrete outcomes in the field.
4. He was pleased to note that Samoa had acceded to the Convention against Torture on 28 March 2019, bringing the number of States parties to 166. Indeed, thanks in part to the work of partners such as the OHCHR Capacity-Building Programme and the Convention against Torture Initiative (CTI), there had been a steady increase in the numbers of accessions and ratifications. The Committee's commitment to cooperating with other anti-torture mechanisms, including the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD), served as a positive example to the wider human rights community on the value of joint action.
5. The review of the treaty body system in 2020 had an important role to play in ensuring the sustainability and impact of the treaty bodies on the ground. The Committee had already been actively engaged in that process, having defined its position and jointly organized a meeting in Copenhagen that had been attended by focal points on the review from other treaty bodies. The 2019 meeting of the Chairs of the treaty bodies would be the last formal opportunity for such discussions before the review took place in 2020, but Committee members were also encouraged to pursue dialogues elsewhere with States parties and non-governmental organizations. To support that process, a dedicated extranet page had been created that provided information and background documentation on the review.
6. In anticipation of the review of the treaty body system, and pursuant to the adoption of General Assembly resolution 73/162, OHCHR was assisting the Secretary-General of the United Nations in preparing the next biennial report on the status of the treaty body system for presentation to the General Assembly in January 2020. To that end, OHCHR was requesting inputs from States and other stakeholders on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 68/268 and the review by the end of June 2019. The Secretary-General's report would highlight the lessons learned from the implementation of the resolution and would address issues such as funding problems in connection with the timely treatment and follow-up of individual complaints. It was hoped that the report would help to produce solutions that would make the system more effective, thereby making a real difference for rights holders at the national level.
7. **Mr. Touzé**, referring to the concern recently expressed by members of the Human Rights Committee that it had not been possible for them to hold a third session of meetings in 2019, asked whether the Committee against Torture would face similar constraints.
8. **Mr. Hani** said that, in the light of the tight deadline being imposed, the Committee would appreciate further details on the exact nature of the information requested by OHCHR on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 68/268 and the review of the treaty body system. He would also like to know whether the role of the treaty bodies, and particularly of the Committee against Torture, had been discussed at the previous

intersessional meeting of the Human Rights Council. It would be useful to know whether the issue of cooperation between the treaty bodies and the Human Rights Council had been raised at that meeting, particularly in relation to the Council's special procedures mechanism.

9. **Mr. Salama** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that there was a risk that the budget cuts faced by the treaty body system would affect the Committee's work. His colleagues at OHCHR were in the process of determining the magnitude and potential impact of the cuts and would soon be in a position to report back to the Committee with more specific details in that regard.

10. The tight deadline that had been set for the information requested in the context of the Secretary-General's biennial report on the status of the treaty body system was considered to be a positive sign, as it demonstrated that States Members considered the report to be a priority. Ideally, it was hoped that the treaty bodies could formulate a positive shared vision of the treaty body system to contribute to the report's drafting process by the end of the 2019 meeting of the Chairs. However, he was mindful that time was against them. Needless to say, any thoughts that the Committee had on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 68/268 and the 2020 review were of great value and every effort would be made to present them for discussion at the General Assembly meeting in January 2020, regardless of when they had been delivered to OHCHR.

#### **Adoption of the agenda**

11. *The agenda was adopted.*

#### **Organizational and other matters**

12. **The Chair**, providing an overview of the Committee's activities for the session, said that, in addition to the State party reviews, the Committee would be considering and adopting five lists of issues prior to reporting and two lists of issues. It would also be considering 12 individual communications and 8 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. The Committee would also continue its internal thematic discussions on fundamental legal safeguards and on how to structure its dialogues with States parties. The Committee would hold meetings with the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture and CTI. It had also invited the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment to present its annual report and would receive a briefing from the Omega Research Foundation on controlling trade in tools of torture.

*The public part of the meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.*