



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

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Committee against Torture Seventy-seventh session

Summary record of the first part (public)* of the 2011th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 10 July 2023, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Heller

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* The summary record of the second part (closed) of the meeting appears as document [CAT/C/SR.2011/Add.1](#).

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

Opening of the session

1. **Mr. Cissé-Gouro** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) declared open the seventy-seventh session of the Committee against Torture.

2. He said that 2023 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, a landmark document that had paved the way for historical advances in the field of human rights. To commemorate that anniversary, and as part of a year-long initiative to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Government of Austria and OHCHR had held a high-level event in June in Vienna to reflect on progress made and to renew the worldwide consensus on human rights. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had used his keynote address at the event to point out that, although tremendous gains had been achieved since the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, there had also been dramatic rollbacks, often as a result of conflict and oppression, while a disturbing trend was emerging towards greater division within and between countries, resulting in hostile stand-offs between opposing blocks that threatened not only national cohesion, but also multilateral solutions, the one sure way out of the chaos.

3. In that context, he welcomed the joint statement issued by the Committee against Torture, the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, the Special Rapporteur on torture and the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture on 26 June 2023 – the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture – calling on States to uphold the absolute prohibition on torture in armed conflict and reminding parties to conflicts that the protections afforded by international human rights law continued to apply in such situations. It had been a timely declaration, since there were currently over a hundred armed conflicts taking place around the world, which created an increased risk of torture for combatants and civilians and prevented victims of torture from obtaining redress and rehabilitation. States must take decisive action to prevent acts of torture, including by making torture a specific offence under their national legislation, by informing law enforcement and military personnel about the prohibition on torture and their responsibility to disobey orders to carry out acts of torture or ill-treatment, and by investigating such acts, including those committed by non-State actors.

4. On 8 June 2023, two States parties to the Convention against Torture had filed a joint application with the International Court of Justice instituting proceedings against a third State party concerning alleged violations by the latter of its obligations under the Convention. The application was an example of the use of the dispute settlement mechanism provided for in article 30, under which States parties could refer disputes concerning the interpretation or application of the Convention to the International Court of Justice. OHCHR would be following the proceedings before the Court closely.

5. OHCHR had continued to play an active role in supporting the treaty body strengthening process. It had prepared a working paper on the implementation of the conclusions adopted by the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies at their thirty-fourth annual meeting, in June 2022. That document, which was intended to serve as a guide for the creation of an efficient, fit-for-purpose, cost-effective, coherent and sustainable treaty body system, had recently been reviewed by the Chairs at their thirty-fifth annual meeting, held from 29 May to 2 June 2023 in New York. At that meeting, the Chairs had agreed to establish a coordination mechanism to support the harmonization of working methods and substantive coordination on common and intersectional issues and had determined that the options proposed for the implementation of a predictable calendar for State party reviews were in line with the conclusions they had adopted in 2022. However, they had stated that the human rights treaty bodies would implement the predictable review calendar and the proposed solutions for the digitalization of their work only if Member States provided the necessary human, technical and financial resources. The Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights had all expressed their firm commitment to continue to support the treaty body strengthening process, including in respect of the budgetary implications of the proposed reforms.

Adoption of the agenda (CAT/C/77/1)

6. *The agenda was adopted.*

Organizational and other matters

7. **The Chair** said that, during the current session, the Committee would consider State party reports submitted by New Zealand, Romania, Spain and Switzerland. Delegations from all four States parties would attend in person. In advance of those dialogues, the Committee would hold private briefings with representatives of the national preventive mechanisms of the four countries and with representatives of the national human rights institutions of Spain and New Zealand. Private meetings would also be held with non-governmental organizations from New Zealand, Spain and Switzerland.

8. The Committee would consider 18 individual communications during the session. Follow-up reports would be presented by the rapporteur for follow-up to concluding observations and the rapporteur for follow-up to decisions on complaints. Information on cases and allegations of reprisals against individuals and organizations cooperating with the Committee would be presented by the rapporteur on reprisals.

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