



CONVENTION AGAINST TORTURE INITIATIVE
CTI2024.ORG

Annual Forum

29 November 2018, 11:00

Graduate Institute, Geneva

Opening remarks

by H.E. Hasan Kleib, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the UN in Geneva, on behalf of the CTI core States

Excellencies, distinguished panelists, Madam Facilitator, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends of the Convention against Torture Initiative,

On behalf of the CTI Core States of Chile, Denmark, Ghana, Morocco and my own country, Indonesia, I am delighted to be able to **welcome** you all to this year's Annual Forum.

This year's Forum coincides with a number of important milestones, the most significant of which is the **70th anniversary** of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Article 5 of the **Universal Declaration** was the UN's first modern statement on the prohibition against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. It was one of several articles that were adopted *unanimously* by the 58 States participating in the adoption meeting on 10 December 1948 at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris.

Many UN and regional treaties now protect persons from torture and other ill-treatment. International legal developments since 1948 have been significant. Today, we are here to **focus on one of these developments**, the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT), as well as its Optional Protocol. UNCAT was adopted to give a specific voice to this issue, and which now enjoys the support of **165 States parties** – a remarkable achievement and a strong recognition of the absolute character of this important international norm.

For CTI's part, together with our friends and partners, we are working collaboratively to take this vision of an absolute prohibition against torture forward through the CTI.

The **Convention against Torture Initiative** or CTI is a cross-regional, 10-year inter-governmental initiative, with the purpose to facilitate technical advice, support

and cooperation among States to help them overcome obstacles to ratification and/or implementation of UNCAT. Our ultimate vision is that by 2024, all UN Member States will be party to this instrument, and will be actively implementing it.

You will hear from my **fellow CTI Ambassadors** about the progress we have been making in reaching our vision shortly.

2018 also marks **two other important milestones** relevant to preventing and addressing torture and inhuman treatment. It has, for example, been 40 years since the Trust Fund for Victims in Chile was established in 1978, which later transformed into the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, as well as 30 years since the Committee against Torture reviewed its first State report. So many anniversaries - You could even say we are a little fixated on anniversaries at the CTI! And maybe also within the UN system!

Nonetheless, **anniversaries** present good opportunities for reflection – on changes and reforms that have worked, things that may not have worked as we would have hoped, and how we might adapt our practices to changing

circumstances, the latest technology and the ever more complex and interconnected world we live in.

Yet even as it is a more complex world, there are some things that stay true – torture is never excusable or permissible in any setting or situation.

At this year's Annual Forum, *we are being challenged to reflect on how far have we come in preventing and eradicating torture? What has worked, what hasn't?*

What are some of the key challenges and how can we collectively address those?

And what is the outlook: what can we each do to reach universal ratification, and actively implement the ideals as well as the concrete obligations we have signed up to?

I am delighted that we are joined today by our distinguished panel - the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Botswana, Her Excellency Athaliah Lesiba Molokomme, the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Guatemala Her Excellency Carla María Rodríguez, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Mr. Nils Melzer and Dr. Carla Ferstman from Essex University in the United Kingdom. They have generously agreed to give us their thoughts and ideas

for how to take this agenda forward, and to help prompt our conversations this afternoon. I thank them sincerely for their time and expertise.

Let me end with the words of the great Ghanaian statesman, and former UN Secretary General, the late Kofi Annan,

“Fighting torture and inhuman treatment is an individual and collective responsibility that requires all of us to rise up whenever these rights we hold dear are sacrificed on the altar of national security, economic imperatives or any other reason”.¹

The meeting is open. I will now pass the floor to Dr. Alice Edwards, Head of the CTI Secretariat, to take us through today’s agenda.

¹ From an OMCT ceremony in Geneva on 23 June 2010 - Kofi Annan and Sandrine Salerno, Mayor of Geneva, formally signed the Manifesto on 23 June 2010 to mark the launching of an international campaign to alert everyone to the dangers which a society that tolerates torture risks (<http://www.omct.org/international-campaigns/campaign-prohibition-torture/>)