

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

25th Session – Item 3 General Debate

Joint Statement by Chile, Denmark, Ghana, Indonesia and Morocco

Check against delivery

Thank you Mr President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of [Chile, Denmark, Ghana, Indonesia and Morocco].

All Member States of the United Nations have pledged to achieve the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”. Torture is never, under any circumstances justified.

Despite a series of advances over the last 60 years, we are still far from keeping this promise to ‘all peoples and all nations’, as proclaimed by the Declaration. Worse still, over the past ten years we have seen repeated attempts to trivialize, and even defend, the use of torture.

This is why the Governments of Chile, Denmark, Ghana, Indonesia and Morocco, last week during this Council Session launched an appeal to our fellow members of the United Nations: We can and we must do a better job to protect all persons from torture and ill-treatment - in all parts of the world. To do so requires new thinking, constructive collaboration and shared responsibilities.

We believe that the starting point must be the universal ratification and implementation of the UN Convention against Torture. The Convention spells out the measures that States should take to prevent abuses, to protect detained persons, to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of torture, as well as to provide redress.

It has been 30 years since the adoption of the Convention. The five countries behind this initiative want to invite all Governments to join us over the next decade to achieve universal ratification and to put the Convention into concrete practice.

We don’t claim to have solved all the problems in our own countries. The recent years have demonstrated that torture and ill-treatment can happen everywhere. But we have taken steps to reduce the risks, by ratifying the Convention, passing anti-torture laws, or taken steps in order to establish detention monitoring measures. And we want to do more.

One of the most regular concerns expressed by fellow States to those undergoing Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council has been related to measures and mechanisms to protect people from torture. Let us commit to helping each other to actually act on such recommendations. We appeal to all UN and intergovernmental agencies, national institutions, policy and lawmakers, experts and non-governmental agencies that are able to provide quality advice and sustained support, to come together for maximum coordination, sensible divisions of tasks and creative solution sharing.

As part of the Convention against Torture Initiative we will explore new forms of collaboration. Over the next ten years we will organize thematic fora, the first in Geneva early June, to address obstacles hindering universal respect and full implementation of the Convention.

We commit to promoting public debates to raise awareness of the right to protection from torture. We commit to devising ways to measure adherence to the Convention and we commit to reporting back annually to the UN Human Rights Council and the General Assembly on progress that is being made related to this initiative.

Forty Member States of the United Nations have still not ratified the Convention against Torture, and of the 154 States that have, many still face challenges of living up to their commitments. We want, once and for all, to remove torture from the toolkit of terror and oppression and to put an end to the profound traumas and societal wounds caused by this violent practice.