



Thematic Dialogue

THE ROLE OF NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN TORTURE PREVENTION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

*ROOM XVIII, PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA
21 MARCH 2007*

Prior to the 19th annual meeting of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC), the OHCHR National Institutions Unit will hold a half-day thematic dialogue on the current opportunities and emerging challenges for National Human Rights Institutions (NIs) in relation to torture prevention. **This meeting will be held on the 21 March 2007, from 1000- 1300 at Room XVIII, Palais des Nations, Geneva.** This dialogue is open to all those interested in participating including, NGOs, the media, permanent missions and other UN offices.

Program summary

The conference programme includes discussions on:

- ◆ New opportunities for NI engagement with international instruments, such as the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment (OPCAT), Sub-Committee on prevention;
- ◆ Interaction with Special Procedure Mandate holders that visit various countries and engage in dialogue with national authorities with a view of torture prevention;
- ◆ NI experiences in torture prevention including monitoring places of detention, complaints handling and ratification as well as action with respect to antiterrorist laws;
- ◆ Exploring avenues of cooperation between NIs, NGOs and the relevant international mechanisms on the prevention of torture.

Structure of the dialogue

The structure of the conference encourages expert members of NIs, NGOs and international mechanisms to engage in a plenary discussion with the aim of sharing experiences and expertise on torture prevention mechanisms and practices and also discussing the emerging challenges.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OP-CAT) established the Sub-committee on Prevention. The OP-CAT requires the states parties to designate or establish one or several independent National Preventive Mechanisms (NPMs) for the prevention of torture at the domestic level. The NPMs must have the requisite authority and expertise to visit places of detention and make recommendations to governments on measures of torture prevention. Currently several NIs have the mandate to visit places of detention. In this respect, the OP-CAT creates a new opportunity for NIs to play an active role in torture prevention at different levels.

Through this platform of discussion, NIs from different regions will be given an opportunity to share their practical experiences in implementing activities related to torture prevention at the national level.

Recommendations will emerge from this dialogue on how NIs can actively engage in torture prevention at the national and international level.

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AGENDA

10:00 – 10:20

Opening Remarks

Chair: Morten Kjaerum, Executive Director, Danish Institute for Human Rights

10:20 – 12:45

Working Session

“Torture Prevention: NIs’ experiences and International Mechanisms”

10:20 – 10:30 **Monitoring processes and visiting detention centers**

Speaker: Margaret Sekaggya, Chairperson, Uganda Human Rights Commission

10:30 – 10:40 **Working towards an effective complaints handling system**

Speaker: Aruna Sharma, Joint Secretary, National Human Rights Commission of India

10:40 – 11:10 **Discussion**

11:10– 11:25 **Working with Special Procedure Mandate holders in relation to torture and investigations**

Speaker: Leila Zerrougui, Chairperson, Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

11:25– 11:55 **New Opportunities and Challenges for NIs in Torture Prevention**

Speaker: Mark Thomson, Secretary General, Association for Prevention of Torture
Speaker: Peter Splinte, Representative of Amnesty International in Geneva

11:55- 12:05 **Trust fund for victims of torture**

Speaker: Natasha Foucard, Human Rights Officer, OHCHR

12:05- 12:45 **Discussion**

12:45 – 13:00

Closing Session

Recommendations on Enhancing the role of NIs in Torture Prevention

Chair: Morten Kjaerum, Executive Director, Danish Institute for Human Rights