**The OPCAT as a cooperative triangular relationship: challenges and ways forward**

***How can the SRT mandate benefit from and cooperate with NPMs?***

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues and friends,

* It is a privilege and a pleasure for me to be here today (less than tree weeks after taking over the SRT Mandate) to celebrate the 10th anniversary of an instrument as important as the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT).
* Experience shows that torture and other forms of ill-treatment are most likely to take place in isolated, secret and unmonitored places of detention. In practice, therefore, regular inspection of places of detention remains the most effective measure to prevent torture and ill-treatment.
* So, there can be no doubt that the adoption, in 2006, of OPCAT and its provisions establishing the visiting mechanisms of the Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture (SPT) and of the National Preventive Mechanisms (NPM) represented a historical step forward in the universal fight against torture.
* While international inspections are carried out not only by the SPT, but also by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, by my own Mandate and, very importantly of course, also by the ICRC, the resources of these institutions are limited and their monitoring tends to be selective.
* In practice, only the National Preventive Mechanisms can ensure a systematic and comprehensive monitoring of places of detention in their respective countries. It is to the NPMs, therefore, that the ultimate responsibility for national prevention activities will fall.
* My own approach to the SRT Mandate will be that of an open and constructive engagement with national authorities, with victims of torture, with civil society organisations as well as with other international mechanisms, including the SPT. In addition to visiting places of detention, I will use the opportunity of fact-finding visits to encourage States to take effective legislative, administrative and judicial measures to prevent torture.
  + In particular, wherever necessary, I will call upon States to ratify the Convention against Torture and its Optional Protocol and to establish independent and professional National Preventive Mechanisms through legislative action and on the basis of an inclusive and transparent process, in full compliance with the Paris Principles.
  + Whenever possible, I will meet with the designated NPMs during country visits and discuss potential areas of coope-ration, reflect on our respective roles and methods of work, and will also share lessons learnt during this important work of ours. Information collected by NPMs and made available to me can also contribute to my own recommendations and guide my assessment of the ability and willingness of authorities to prevent and prohibit torture.
  + As a matter of principle, I will encourage national authorities to grant NPMs the necessary independence and unrestricted access to all places where persons may be deprived of their liberty. For there really is no better deterrent to torture than a strong national will to combat and prevent such abhorrent abuse.
* The Committee Against Torture, the SPT, the NPMs and the Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture are part of a wider system complemented not only by the SRT Mandate, but by countless other stakeholders throughout the world. My predecessor worked in close coordination with all of them, and I will ensure that the synergies between the guardians of the protection against torture are not only preserved but, if possible, even further developed.

I look forward to working with all of you towards our common goal of eradicating torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment once and for all!

Thank you!