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Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
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High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture

Note by the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

A. Submission of the report

1. The present note was prepared in accordance with the arrangements approved by the Human Rights Council in its decision 2/102. It presents updated information on the activities of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, and in particular the recommendations adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Fund at its thirty-fifth session, held from 25 January to 3 February 2012, and at its thirty-sixth session, held in Geneva from 15 to 19 October 2012.

2. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights approved the recommendations on behalf of the Secretary-General. The present note complements the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Fund, submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session detailing the outcomes of the thirty-fifth session of the Board of Trustees (A/67/264, paras. 13-19).

3. Pursuant to the recommendations made by the Office of Internal Oversight Services in its report on the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery of 2007 (AUD/01835/07), the secretariats of both Funds were placed, on 1 of January 2012, within the purview of the Human Rights Treaties Division of the Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR). Furthermore, the post of Secretary was established for both Funds. A new post of Fundraiser dedicated to humanitarian funds was also created within the Human Rights Treaties Division and placed in the Donors and External Relations Section.

B. Mandate of the Fund

4. The Fund receives voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals. In accordance with the mandate of the Fund, outlined in General Assembly resolution 36/151 and the practices established by the Board of Trustees in 1982, the Fund provides grants to established channels of assistance, including non-governmental organizations, associations of victims and family members of victims, private and public hospitals, legal clinics, public interest law firms and individual lawyers that submit projects involving medical, psychological, social, financial, legal and humanitarian or other forms of assistance to victims of torture and members of their families.

C. Board of Trustees

5. The Secretary-General administers the Fund through OHCHR with the advice of the Board of Trustees, composed of five members acting in a personal capacity and appointed by the Secretary-General with due regard to equitable geographical distribution and in consultation with their Governments. On 26 October 2011, the Secretary-General reappointed Mercedes Doretto (Argentina) for a final period of three years, and appointed Natasa Kandic (Serbia), Maria Cristina de Mendonca (Portugal), Morad el-Shazly (Egypt) and Anastasia Pinto (India) for a three-year term, renewable once.

D. Admissibility criteria

6. Project admissibility criteria are outlined in the Fund's guidelines. They require a project to be presented by an established channel of assistance, including non-governmental

organizations, associations of victims and family members of victims, private and public hospitals, legal clinics, public interest law firms and individual lawyers. The beneficiaries must be direct victims of torture and/or direct family members. Priority is given to projects providing direct assistance to victims of torture, which may consist in medical or psychological assistance, help with social or financial reintegration through vocational training for victims, and various forms of legal assistance for victims or members of their families, including assistance in seeking redress or applying for asylum. Depending on the resources available, the Fund may finance projects to organize training programmes, seminars or conferences to allow health-care professionals or other service providers to exchange best practices. However, grant requests for projects involving investigation, research, studies, publications or similar activities are not admissible.

II. Thirty-fifth session of the Board of Trustees

7. Owing to the fact that the new Board of Trustees, was appointed on 26 October 2011, the thirty-fifth session of the Board, originally planned from 17 to 21 October 2011, had to be postponed to early in 2012, and was thus held from 27 January to 3 February 2012. At the session, Ms. Doretti was appointed by acclamation as Chairperson for a two-year term. The Board also examined applications for funding and made recommendations on grants to be allotted to beneficiary organizations for the period from January to December 2012.

A. Financial situation of the Fund

8. The table below shows the contributions received between 1 January and 31 December 2011. These contributions were allocated to grants recommended by the Board at its thirty-fifth session.

Contributions and pledges received from 1 January to 31 December 2011

<i>Donor</i>	<i>Amount (United States dollars)</i>	<i>Date of receipt</i>
States		
Andorra	20 938	28 October 2011
Argentina	3 405	31 January 2011
Canada	61 170	24 March 2011
Chile	10 000	4 October 2011
Czech Republic	9 433	26 September 2011
Denmark	383 656	22 November 2011
Germany	407 407	11 May 2011
Greece	39 422	3 January 2011
Ireland	119 718	20 April 2011
Kuwait	10 000	7 April 2011
Liechtenstein	27 115	20 April 2011
Morocco	3 000	23 March 2011
Norway	183 688	27 June 2011
Qatar	10 000	18 February 2011
Republic of Korea	95 000	25 April 2011

<i>Donor</i>	<i>Amount (United States dollars)</i>	<i>Date of receipt</i>
Turkey	10 000	12 December 2011
United Arab Emirates	9 982	9 May 2011
United States of America	5 700 000	8 November 2011
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	38 948	17 November 2011
Holy See	1 000	9 September 2011
Private sources		
Individuals	25 285	25 August and 10 November 2011
Total contributions	7 169 167	
Pledges		
Afghanistan	500	8 November 2010
Belgium	284 900	9 June 2011
Finland	194 667	16 December 2011
Spain	341 997	2 November 2011
Total pledges	822 064	

B. Recommendations adopted by the Board at its thirty-fifth session

9. At its session, the Board examined information prepared by the secretariat concerning projects proposals for 2012, including new applications, and the analysis of narrative, financial and audit reports on the use of grants paid in previous years. It considered requests for new grants for more than 280 projects providing direct assistance to victims of torture and their family members in 2012, as well as requests for 15 projects amounting to \$397,388 for training and seminars for professionals assisting victims to exchange information on experiences and best practices.

10. The Board of Trustees made recommendations for grants for more than 220 ongoing and 22 new projects providing direct assistance to 70,000 victims in more than 70 countries, for a total amount of \$7,089,471. The High Commissioner approved the Board's recommendations on 16 February 2012 on behalf of the Secretary-General.

11. Owing to the significant decrease in the level of contributions received in 2011, at its thirty-fifth session the Board was compelled to make further strategic cuts to grants awarded to ongoing projects for 2012 in addition to those already made for the 2011 cycle. Consequently, a decrease of 40 per cent was applied to the grants awarded to projects located in Western European and other States, while the level of support of projects located in other regions was reduced on average by 30 per cent.

12. With a view to mitigating the effects of the cuts on small grass-roots organizations, in particular those located in remote regions where access to alternative funding is difficult, no strategic cuts were applied to grants of \$20,000 or below. It should be noted that, as a rule, support for all grantees was capped at \$80,000 instead of the usual \$200,000. In addition, funding for training and seminars for professionals assisting victims was capped at \$5,000 instead of the usual \$30,000. Moreover, as was already the case in 2011, support for

direct assistance projects presented by new grantees was capped at \$20,000 instead of the usual \$50,000.

13. Despite the financial limitations, the Board recommended that \$300,000 be set aside for urgent requests and unforeseen needs in 2012, as well as for emergencies in the intersessional period. Notably, in order to respond to the needs of victims in the context of the recent developments across the Middle East and North Africa, in June 2012 an open call was launched for projects aimed at assisting victims of torture.

III. Thirty-sixth session of the Board of Trustees

14. The thirty-sixth session of the Board was held from 15 to 19 October 2012. The Board examined applications for funding and made recommendations on grants to be allotted to beneficiary organizations for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2013.

15. The amount available for distribution to projects at the thirty-sixth session was calculated after deducting programme support costs, operating cash reserve and expenditure for non-grant activities from the total amount of contributions received after the thirty-fifth session of the Board of Trustees, held in February 2012 and the end of 2012.

16. The table below shows the contributions received between 1 January and 19 November 2012.

Contributions and pledges received from 1 January to 19 November 2012

<i>Donor</i>	<i>Amount (United States dollars)</i>	<i>Date of receipt</i>
States		
Afghanistan	500	8 March 2012
Andorra	12 043	12 July 2012
Argentina	3 500	23 February 2012
Austria	112 882	18 April 2012
Canada	60 000	11 April 2012
Chile	10 000	6 December 2011
Finland	338 083	2 November 2012
Germany	730 412	12 April 2012
India	25 000	4 April 2012
Ireland	113 941	29 March 2012
Kuwait	10 000	16 February 2012
Morocco	2 000	25 July 2012
Norway	174 490	23 May 2012
Peru	1 850	11 May 2012
Saudi Arabia	50 000	7 September 2012
United Arab Emirates	10 000	16 March 2012
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	158 228	21 March 2012
United States of America	6 000 000	5 November 2012
Total contributions	7 812 929	

<i>Donor</i>	<i>Amount (United States dollars)</i>	<i>Date of receipt</i>
Pledges		
Denmark	347 826	6 November 2012
Turkey	10 000	8 November 2011
Total pledges	357 826	

17. After two consecutive years of dramatic decreases in contributions received by the Fund, in 2012 renewed outreach and fund-raising efforts led to the consolidation of the support of donors at the level reached in 2011, thus allowing the Board of Trustees not to have to apply further cuts to grants.

18. Notwithstanding such efforts, the diminished resources available remain a concern, as the Fund is still unable to meet all demands for support that it receives, in particular in relation to grave human rights emergencies, such as the unfolding crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. For 2013, more than 280 applications were received, requesting almost \$15 million in support, against less than \$7 million available for grants.

19. At its thirty-sixth session, the Board of Trustees considered a total of 266 admissible project proposals aimed at providing direct assistance to victims of torture and their family members, amounting to \$14,823,044. Specifically, it considered 241 ongoing project proposals amounting to \$14,070,066 and 19 new project proposals amounting to \$633,137. The Board also considered requests for six projects, amounting to \$119,841, for training and seminars for professionals assisting victims of torture.

20. The Board considered positively a total of 262 projects. It recommended approval for prompt disbursement of a total of 247 project grants in more than 70 countries for a total amount of \$6,964,100. It also recommended pre-approval for 15 projects grants for a total amount of \$227,500, to be disbursed when the relevant funds become available.

21. The Board also recommended that \$300,000 be set aside for emergency grants to be considered in the course of 2013, through its intersessional procedure.

22. Of note, some of the restraining measures introduced by the Board at its previous session were reiterated by the Board. For the second consecutive year, support for ongoing grantees was capped, as a rule, at \$80,000 (instead of the usual \$200,000) and, in the case of first-time grantees, at \$20,000 (instead of the usual \$50,000). Funding for training and seminars for professionals assisting victims was capped at \$7,500 (instead of the usual \$30,000).

IV. Making a contribution

23. Governments, non-governmental organizations and other private or public entities can contribute to the Fund. For more information on how to contribute and Fund details, donors are requested to contact the secretariat of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland; e-mail: unvfvf@ohchr.org; telephone: +41-22-917-9624; fax: +41-22-917-9017.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

24. Pursuant to the appeals made by the General Assembly in its resolution 66/150 and by the Board of Trustees of the Fund, as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly (67/264), donors are invited to pay their contributions to the Fund before the thirty-eighth session of the Board (to be held in October 2013), in order to allow the Board to take them into account at that session.

25. On the basis of the requests received for 2013, it is expected that approximately \$15 million will be requested by organizations for 2014.

26. In the light of the difficult financial situation faced by the Fund since 2010, the Board has also reiterated its call to regular donors to increase, as much as possible, their contributions to the Fund in order to provide it with the necessary resources to meet the growing needs of victims of torture and the members of their families worldwide.

27. The Board strongly encourages States that have not yet contributed to the Fund to do so, preferably before September 2013, to expand the donor base of the Fund.
