United Nations

Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

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Committee against Torture
Seventieth session

Summary record of the second part (public)* of the 1826th meeting
Held via videoconference on Wednesday, 28 April 2021, at 2.20 p.m. Central European Summer Time

Chair: Mr. Heller (Vice-Chair)

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*   The summary record of the first part (closed) of the meeting appears as document CAT/C/SR.1826.

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The public part of the meeting was called to order at 2.20 p.m.

Organizational and other matters

1.   **The Chair** said that, at its seventieth session, the Committee had adopted the annual report on its activities. It had also adopted lists of issues prior to reporting for Belarus, Chile, Czechia, Norway, Qatar, the Russian Federation and Senegal. The adoption of lists of issues prior to reporting for Canada, Guatemala, the Netherlands, Peru and Saudi Arabia had been scheduled for the seventy-second session. The Committee had made a number of decisions related to information submitted under article 20 of the Convention and would keep one situation under review until the seventy-first session.

2.   In the context of the intersecting pandemic-related and budgetary crises facing the Committee and the entire human rights protection system, the Committee had discussed ways to tackle its backlog of State party reports, highlighting the need to ensure a well-functioning online platform for the conduct of virtual meetings and to address connectivity issues, time differences between members' locations and difficulties in securing interpretation. To advance its work, the Committee had decided to organize an online review of a State party during the seventy-first session; the country considered would be Belgium, which had publicly announced its willingness to participate in such online reviews. The Committee's decision was a response to the current exceptional circumstances and would not set a precedent for the future. The exercise would, however, be an opportunity to review working methods with a view to ensuring more focused reviews of States parties in the future.

3.   During the current session, in accordance with the recommendations of the working group on communications, the Committee had adopted 14 discontinuance decisions. With the petitions unit of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Committee had discussed its strategy for processing individual communications and decided to devote most of its seventy-first session to addressing the most urgent cases. The Committee had also held a productive meeting with non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

4.   The Committee wished to echo the serious concerns expressed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in her letter dated 25 March 2021 regarding the General Assembly's decision at the end of 2020 not to approve a requested increase in staff resources for assisting the treaty bodies. The Committee and other human rights mechanisms were striving to find innovative ways to address the lack of resources. However, to make real progress in its work, it would need tangible support from States and OHCHR. It was more important than ever to work with States and NGOs to address the deterioration of the human rights situation and the current threats to the treaty body system.

Closure of the session

5.   After the customary exchange of courtesies, **the Chair** declared the seventieth session of the Committee against Torture closed.

The meeting rose at 2.30 p.m.