Seventy-eighth session
Item 73 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Promotion and protection of human rights: implementation of human rights instruments

United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 36/151 and 77/209. It describes the activities undertaken by the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, in particular the outcome of the fifty-seventh session of the Board of Trustees of the Fund, which was held in Geneva from 20 to 24 March 2023.

* A/78/150.
I. Introduction

A. Submission of the report

1. The present report was prepared in accordance with the arrangements approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 36/151, by which it established the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. It presents the activities undertaken by the Fund, in particular the outcomes of the fifty-seventh session of the Board of Trustees of the Fund, which was held in Geneva from 20 to 24 March 2023. The report complements the report of the Secretary-General on the Fund, which covered the outcome of the fifty-sixth session of the Board, held in Geneva from 10 to 14 October 2022, which was submitted to the Human Rights Council at its fifty-second session (A/HRC/52/57).

B. Mandate of the Fund

2. The Fund receives voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals. In accordance with its mandate and the practice established by its Board of Trustees, the Fund provides grants to established channels of assistance, including non-governmental organizations, associations of victims and members of their families, private and public hospitals, legal clinics and public interest law firms, that submit project proposals for the provision of medical, psychological, social, financial, legal, humanitarian and other forms of direct assistance to victims of torture and members of their families.

C. Administration of the Fund and Board of Trustees

3. The Secretary-General administers the Fund through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) with the advice of a Board of Trustees composed of five members acting in their personal capacity and appointed by the Secretary-General with due regard for equitable geographical distribution and in consultation with their Governments. During the reporting period, the Board was composed of Vladimir Jović (Serbia), Juan Ernesto Méndez (Argentina), Lawrence Mute (Chair, Kenya) and Vivienne Nathanson (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland). Sara Hossain (Bangladesh) resigned from her mandate as member of the Board of Trustees on 23 January 2023.

II. Fifty-seventh session of the Board of Trustees

4. The fifty-seventh session of the Board of Trustees was held in Geneva from 20 to 24 March 2023 and was chaired by Mr. Mute. In line with its programme of work, the Board covered six main issues: (a) capacity-building grants; (b) policy issues and amendments to guidelines; (c) restricted civic space, including reprisals; (d) coordination and strategic partnerships; (e) grant management, including on-site visits; and (f) workshop and public event on torture and disability.

A. Capacity-building grants

5. Since 1985, through the capacity-building funding stream, the Fund has awarded 208 grants, enabling organizations to increase their own capacity or the capacity of other organizations, networks or individuals, to provide services to victims of torture and their families.
6. During the session, the Board continued the strategic revision of the capacity-building funding stream of the Fund initiated in 2022, with the objective of assessing and increasing its effectiveness. Trustees recommended that the pool of recipients of capacity-building grants should be diversified to capitalize on local knowledge, to provide additional resources to domestic organizations and to ensure that the needs of specific groups are targeted by the projects. To this end, the Board recommended conducting a needs assessment survey of the Fund’s grantees to identify gaps in current capacity that may limit the provision of quality services to torture survivors. The data collected from this needs assessment will inform the future of the capacity-building funding stream, including application requirements and evaluation criteria.

B. Policy issues and amendments to guidelines

7. Following policy discussions during the fifty-fifth session, the Board recommended a number of amendments to the guidelines of the Fund for the use of applicants and grantees.¹ These include adjustments to further incorporate inclusive language and to strengthen a victim-centred approach and a gender perspective. Amendments also include stipulations allowing for a more flexible funding approach which would enable grantees to overcome challenges in operating under restricted civic space (see paras. 8 and 9), as well as procedures which address allegations of mismanagement, fraud and misuse of funds. Recommended amendments to the guidelines also reflect discussions held during the session about capacity-building grants (see paras. 5 and 6) and the workshop on disability and torture (see paras. 23–28). Finally, some technical adjustments to terminology, admissibility and other administrative requirements were also introduced. The guidelines will be applicable to the 2024 grant cycle.

C. Restricted civic space, including reprisals

8. The Fund is able to fulfil its mandate to channel direct assistance to victims of torture when there is a safe and enabling environment in which civil society organizations can operate. Restrictive and retaliatory measures, including reprisals due to collaboration with the United Nations, faced by civil society may limit or even prevent organizations from obtaining access to the Fund’s grants and from implementing their projects to assist victims of torture. Addressing the impact of restricted civic space on the operations of the Fund, in particular on the effective and safe delivery of assistance to torture survivors, remains a priority for the Board.

9. During the fifty-seventh session, the Board addressed some of the practical obstacles to disbursing funds to grantees in the context of shrinking civic space, including sanctions, judicial closures, restrictive foreign funding legislation and risks to beneficiaries. The Board remains committed to seeking solutions to make funding available in hard-to-reach places where needs are often greatest.

D. Coordination and strategic partnerships

United Nations partners

10. The Board continued its collaboration with the other United Nations anti-torture mechanisms. On 21 March 2023, the Board met remotely with the Chair of the Committee against Torture, Claude Heller; the Chair of the Subcommittee on

Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Suzanne Jabbour; and the incoming Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Alice Jill Edwards. The objective of the regular dialogue among mandate holders was to share updates on the recent activities undertaken in the framework of their respective mandates and to strengthen cooperation. The anti-torture mechanisms agreed to focus their joint statement to commemorate the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, on 26 June 2023, on torture in the context of armed conflict. The Board also agreed to continue to encourage the Fund’s grantees to engage with the anti-torture mechanisms.

11. In addition, the Board met with the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Clément Nyaletsossi Voulé, and the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Morris Tidball-Binz. The Board also held a dialogue with members of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, Carmen Rosa Villa Quintana (Chair); Barbara Lochbihler (Vice-Chair); Juan Pablo Albán Alencastro; Olivier de Frouville; and Suela Janina. They noted that over 20 per cent of the Fund’s grants are channelled into projects that include support to victims of enforced disappearance and their relatives. Discussions with independent experts led to agreements for information-sharing and outreach. For instance, mandate holders committed to exploring avenues for raising awareness about the needs of victims of torture and the role of the Fund, including the conduct of country visits, presentation of reports, interactive dialogues with Member States and public statements.

12. As examples of ongoing synergies among United Nations human rights mechanisms, the Committee against Torture has welcomed and encouraged contributions to the Fund in its concluding observations. Six grantees of the Fund submitted written contributions to the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture in response to its call for inputs on the draft general comment on article 4 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

Civil society partners

13. The Board also collaborates with leading international civil society organizations engaged in preventing, combating and addressing the consequences of torture. During its fifty-seventh session, the Board hosted two online dialogues with international civil society partners to discuss strategic issues of mutual concern. The first meeting was focused on the need to mobilize further global support, including financial resources, to uphold the right to redress for victims of torture worldwide. Taking into account this purpose, ideas were shared by the Center for Victims of Torture and the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims about fundraising strategies aimed at encouraging supportive Member States, including current contributors to the Fund and the Group of Friends of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, to leverage their influence in support of resource mobilization for victims of torture.

14. The Board also held a remote meeting with the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, the World Organisation against Torture and the International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture. The discussion was focused on the engagement of survivors of torture in the global fight against torture. Organizations appealed to the Board of the Fund to robustly echo the

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3 See e.g. CAT/C/LUX/CO/8, para. 7, and CAT/C/SVK/CO/4, para. 36.
voice of survivors before other United Nations human rights mechanisms. The Board agreed to support survivor engagement initiatives.

**Group of Friends of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture and other Member State partners**

15. The Chair of the Board met with representatives of Peru, in its capacity as Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of the Fund, noting the transition of outgoing Co-Chair Denmark and the new Co-Chair Germany. They addressed ways to improve the geographical representation of the Group of Friends, notably by reaching out to potential candidates from the Africa and Asia-Pacific regional groups, which are currently not represented in the Group. The Board also met with representatives of the Commonwealth Secretariat, in order to explore areas of mutual interest and possible support, including working towards a way to address the Member States directly.

**Regional human rights mechanisms**

16. On 3 March 2023, the secretariat of the Fund provided an online briefing to the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights during its seventy-fourth ordinary session. The briefing covered the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, as well as the United Nations voluntary trust fund on contemporary forms of slavery, as both funds are serviced by the same OHCHR secretariat. Commissioners expressed interest in the Fund, noting cross-cutting issues of common concern, such as migration, deprivation of liberty and violence against women. The Committee for the Prevention of Torture in Africa, established by the African Commission, invited the Fund to organize a joint public panel discussion during the second half of 2023. This initiative builds on a strategic partnership established by the Chair of the Board of the Fund during his in-person participation at the seventy-third ordinary session of the Commission, held in Banjul from 20 October to 9 November 2022 (see A/HRC/52/57).

**E. Grant management, including on-site visits**

17. At its fifty-sixth session (ibid.), the Board reviewed a total of 261 admissible annual project applications amounting to a total of $15,808,681 in funding requests received under its call for 2023 applications. The Board awarded a total of 190 annual grants for 2023 amounting to a total of $9,135,999 to assist over 53,380 torture survivors and their families in 90 countries. A total of 71 project applications amounting to $6,672,982 could not be funded owing to a shortage of funding.

18. Among the projects to be implemented from 1 January to 31 December 2023, 184 are for the delivery of direct assistance services to victims of torture and 6 are for strengthening the capacity of the beneficiary organizations to deliver such services.

19. The Board also decided to set aside $605,046 to respond to requests for emergency grants in 2023. From 1 January to 30 June 2023, through an established intersessional procedure, the Board awarded six emergency grants totalling $413,000 to provide services to approximately 362 victims of torture and their families. Grants under the emergency grant procedure were awarded to support services in contexts meeting the following criteria: sudden change of circumstances; surge of needs for torture survivors; and the need for an immediate response.

20. Under its call for 2024 applications, open from 15 January to 1 March 2023, the secretariat of the Fund received 309 annual grant applications from civil society organizations for projects to be implemented from 1 January to 31 December 2024.
Project applications were screened for admissibility by the secretariat of the Fund in March and April 2023. A total of 284 project applications were found admissible, amounting to a total of $17,414,609 in requests for direct assistance to victims of torture and their relatives. The Board is expected to make grant recommendations about these applications at its fifty-eighth session, scheduled from 9 to 13 October 2023 in Geneva.

Monitoring and evaluation

21. The Board, the Fund secretariat and OHCHR field presences conduct on-site visits to project applicants as part of the due diligence process. On-site visits to applicant organizations are undertaken before a grant is awarded for a new project proposal. Periodic visits aimed at monitoring ongoing project implementation and impact are also conducted for applicant organizations seeking renewed support from the Fund. Following a two-year suspension due to coronavirus disease (COVID-19) travel restrictions in 2020 and 2021, on-site visits were resumed in 2022 (ibid.). In 2023, over 100 visits are scheduled, largely by field presences, in consideration of financial and environmental concerns. From 1 January to 30 June 2023, visits were conducted to 21 organizations in nine countries.

Umoja grantor management module and United Nations partner portal

22. The disbursement of annual grants for 2023 was conducted for the second time through the Umoja grantor management module, in compliance with the requirement for all United Nations Secretariat entities. In addition, grant recipients are required to register in the United Nations partner portal. The Board expressed concern about payment delays resulting from the transition process, as well as any potential limitations of access to grantees. These risks are being managed and mitigated by OHCHR.

F. Workshop and public event on torture and disability

23. During its fifty-seventh session, the Board convened the annual thematic discussions and public panels. These events serve as information-sharing platforms to address key challenges, exchange best practices and raise awareness about the plight of victims of torture and their right to redress. In 2023, the expert workshop, held in Geneva on 22 March, was focused on the intersection between torture and disability with the objective of improving how the Fund and other stakeholders can better respond to this overlooked issue. Participants included victims of torture and persons with disabilities, representatives of civil society organizations, including grantees of the Fund and the International Disability Alliance, the World Health Organization and United Nations experts, among others. The event took place in parallel to the twenty-eighth session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with the participation of the Vice-Chair, Rosemary Kayess. The Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Gerard Quinn, and the Vice-Chair of the Committee against Torture, Ana Racu, also provided video messages.

24. During an interactive discussion, participants identified at least four ways that torture and disability intersect: persons with disabilities are sometimes subjected to torture as a result of their disability; certain practices inflicted on persons with disabilities may, under certain circumstances, amount to torture; the impact of torture can result in a disability; and torture survivors with a disability require tailored support. Participants reiterated that the key guiding principle to frame any discussion and action on the topic is “nothing about us without us” and that any such discussion and action should always reflect a human rights-based approach to disability.
25. Workshop participants made recommendations to address ways in which the rights of persons with disabilities can be reflected and upheld by the Fund’s policies, during project evaluation and monitoring and through partnerships, with a view to ensuring that more projects providing tailored services to persons with disabilities are supported by the Fund. Recommendations included areas such as ensuring the meaningful participation of torture survivors, including persons with disabilities, in all matters that affect them as rights holders, including on their recovery; the use of inclusive language and terminology of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; amendments to the Fund’s guidelines to allow for the inclusion of costs relating to reasonable accommodation and accessibility in proposed project budgets; and the building of partnerships with organizations of persons with disabilities and relevant networks in the disability movement.

26. The main conclusions of the workshop were shared publicly by the Chair of the Board during a side event entitled “Agency in recovery: a human rights-based approach to support and care for torture survivors with disabilities”. The event, jointly convened by the Fund and the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, with the support of the Group of Friends, took place 23 March 2023 on the margins of the fifty-second session of the Human Rights Council. The Permanent Representative of Mexico, Francisca E. Méndez Escobar, served as moderator, recalling the importance of Member State support for the Fund. An athlete and survivor of torture from Hungary, István Cservenka, shared his testimony about services offered by Validity Foundation, a grantee of the Fund, which were instrumental in enabling him to live autonomously after a lifetime in institutions, and the importance of a human-rights based approach to disability and support to foster equality and address multiple forms of discrimination. The Impact Manager at Validity Foundation, Sándor Gurbai, highlighted that institutionalization and guardianship systems often failed to promote the independence and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the community and rendered them more vulnerable to torture. He noted how the Fund enabled Validity Foundation to engage in strategic litigation in several countries to challenge such practices.

27. Representatives of two other organizations supported by the Fund highlighted how the grants they receive are used to lend direct support survivors of torture with disabilities and to uphold best practice. The representative of Documenta in Mexico, Diana Sheinbaum, highlighted how torture and ill-treatment in places of deprivation of liberty affect people with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities and explained how the organization uses innovative legal strategies to accompany torture survivors towards empowerment and to promote structural reforms. The representative of the Mental Health Society of Ghana, Humphrey Kofie, spoke about challenges to access to mental health support and how the organization supports people in recovering from traditional faith-based healing methods that amount to torture.

28. The secretariat of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities concluded by recalling the importance of implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, notably the recognition of persons with disabilities as a subject of all human rights, the right redress for the harm caused, and key aspects of a human rights model of disability.
III. United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

29. On 26 June 2023, United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, a joint statement was issued by the Committee against Torture, the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, the Special Rapporteur on torture and the Board of Trustees of the Fund. The experts called on States to respect and uphold the absolute and non-derogable prohibition against torture and underscored that the protections of international human rights law do not cease to be applicable in situations of armed conflict.

30. In the statement, the Chair of the Board of the Fund reiterated the disastrous effects of war on civilians, and the impact that torture has on the lives of victims, and expressed his concern that the needs of survivors are often overlooked during armed conflict and transitional justice processes. He called on States to do their utmost to ensure speedy access to rehabilitative services for victims of torture and highlighted that, during armed conflict, State services are prone to deteriorate, at a time when victims need them most. He emphasized that this was the case in particular for victims of torture subjected to discrimination or in more vulnerable situations, such as persons with disabilities, or those from Indigenous, ethnic, racial, gender or other minority communities.

31. The Chair of the Committee against Torture called on States to take “a zero-tolerance approach” to combating impunity for acts of torture committed by regular armed forces, and those forces under their effective control, and emphasized the need to make torture a crime under domestic legislation. The Special Rapporteur on torture reminded States that the crime of torture should never be subject to amnesties, and highlighted the importance of the continued monitoring and documentation of acts of torture during armed conflict. The Chair of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture urged States and non-State actors to grant full access to entities monitoring all places of deprivation of liberty.

32. The experts concluded that the “prevention, investigation and prosecution of torture, along with the provision of redress, relief and rehabilitation to victims, must be a persistent endeavour; no situation, including armed conflict, should stand in its way”.

33. On 26 June 2023, a side event entitled “Transitioning from horror to healing: preventing torture and helping survivors rebuild their lives” was convened on the margins of the fifty-third session of the Human Rights Council, by the State Department of the United States of America, the Permanent Missions of Denmark, Peru and Switzerland to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, and the Center for Victims of Torture. The hybrid event was aimed at illustrating how the Fund fills crucial healing and justice gaps through support to civil society organizations that enable torture survivors to rehabilitate. The Ambassador of the United States of America to the Human Rights Council, Michèle Taylor, delivered opening remarks encouraging other States to contribute generously to the Fund.

34. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, delivered the keynote address. He expressed solidarity with victims of torture around the world and shared examples of the impact of the Fund to transform the lives of individual survivors and to contribute to advancing justice and accountability. The moderator, Scott Roehm, Director of Global Policy and Advocacy at the Center for Victims of Torture, then introduced the panellists: Natasha Nzazi, an expert on survivor engagement and beneficiary of the Fund from the Democratic Republic of

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the Congo; Vivienne Nathanson, member of the Board of Trustees of the Fund, and Peter Vedel Kessing, former member of the Committee against Torture. They highlighted the persistent difference between the number of torture survivors and availability of rehabilitation services globally. They explained that, while the Fund was uniquely positioned to address this problem, it could be done only to the extent that the Fund had access to sufficient resources. They recalled that, under the Convention against Torture, States have an obligation to ensure victims’ redress, including compensation.

35. The panel was followed by interventions from the floor, including the announcement of pledges for contributions to the Fund from Austria and Montenegro. The Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, Erik Brøgger Rasmussen, also encouraged contributions. Closing remarks were made by the Permanent Representative of Peru, Luis Juan Chuquihuara Chil, as Co-Chair and on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Fund. The event was attended by members of civil society organizations supported by the Fund from around the world, numerous United Nations experts, and representatives of Member States and the Group of Friends of the Fund.

36. In the lead-up to the International Day in 2023, the Fund organized a series of communications activities aimed at raising awareness of the continuing needs of torture survivors and of the transformative impact of the Fund in addressing them. A collection of five illustrated cards featuring survivors of torture from all regions was distributed to all permanent missions in Geneva. The cards provide brief accounts of survivors’ rehabilitation journey and of the role played by the practitioners who support them. They include a Quick Response (QR) code that leads to 40 profiles of torture victims and the civil society practitioners, which were released in the 40 days following 26 June 2022, to mark the Fund’s fortieth anniversary. The Fund also shared multimedia products with its partners, including social media assets, as a means of thanking donors for their contributions. These materials were published on the flagship accounts of OHCHR, and grantees, donors and other stakeholders were invited to take part in the campaign to mobilize further support to victims of torture and the Fund, by sharing them with their own followers. On 26 June 2023, the High Commissioner released a written statement and a video on X (formerly known as Twitter) in which he underscored that torture continues to take place in many parts of the world, emphasized the role of the Fund in supporting survivors, and made an urgent call for “more funds to match rising demand”.

IV. Impact story

37. The work of the Fund has a preventive impact, going beyond the individual lives of the thousands of survivors assisted every year to reach the broader community. Through strategic litigation projects, for instance, victims of torture are supported in gaining access to their right to redress and important legal precedents can also be set. As an example, a conviction for forced pregnancy was handed down by a national criminal court in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, thanks to a project implemented by TRIAL International, a grantee of the Fund. The perpetrator, a warlord, was sentenced to life imprisonment for crimes against humanity, including torture, rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy, and was ordered to provide financial compensation to survivors. The efforts to document the crimes were supported by TRIAL International and free legal assistance was provided to victims in the judicial procedure that led to this verdict.
V. Financial situation of the Fund

38. In 2022, the Fund received contributions from 21 Member States, in addition to public donations amounting to $9,987,966, as well as pledges from two Member States amounting to $20,288, for a total of $10,008,254. The Board welcomed all contributions and pledges made. However, there remained a shortfall of approximately $5,000,000 compared with the eligible applications submitted for annual direct assistance grants for 2023. As a result, the Fund was unable to support projects or provide larger grants that would have assisted approximately 21,000 more victims of torture and their family members in 2023.

39. The tables below show the contributions and pledges received by the Fund in 2022.

Contributions received from 1 January to 31 December 2022
(United States dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Donor</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Date of receipt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>20,283.98</td>
<td>11 August 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>47,694.01</td>
<td>19 April 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>(including a contribution from the government of Quebec)</td>
<td>30,340.63</td>
<td>1 August 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>4,980.00</td>
<td>1 June 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Czechia</td>
<td>8,102.50</td>
<td>29 September 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>703,565.09</td>
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<td>France</td>
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<td></td>
<td>51,706.31</td>
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<td>India</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Individual donors</td>
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Pledges received from 1 January to 31 December 2022
(United States dollars)

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<th>Donor</th>
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<th>Date of receipt</th>
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<td>Andorra</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20 288.07</strong></td>
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</table>

40. As at 30 June 2023, the Fund had received contributions from seven Member States and public donations amounting to $591,118. The number of applications submitted to the Fund for 2024 increased by 17 per cent compared with 2023. A total of 284 grant applications for 2024 (out of the 309 submitted) were found admissible, amounting to a total of $17,414,609 in requests for direct assistance to victims of torture. This represents only a small fraction of the estimated needs for torture survivors worldwide. Should funding remain at the same level as in 2022, or decrease, the funding gap and the number of survivors of torture left without access to services are expected to grow. The Board appeals for contributions to the Fund to be able to exercise its mandate to assist victims of torture and their families, in line with the demand for support.

VI. How to make a contribution to the Fund

41. Governments, non-governmental organizations and other private or public entities can contribute to the Fund. For more information about the Fund and how to contribute, donors are requested to contact:

- 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
- Email: ohchr-supportsurvivors@un.org; telephone: +41 22 917 9376;
- fax: +41 22 917 9017

42. Donations can also be made online at www.ohchr.org/en/donation. Information on the Fund can be found at www.ohchr.org/torturefund.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

43. The prohibition against torture applies at all times. During armed conflict and transitional justice processes, the needs of survivors are often overlooked. State services are prone to deteriorate, at a time when victims need them most, in particular for specialized services for victims of torture subjected to discrimination or in situations of increased vulnerability, such as persons with disabilities, or those from Indigenous, ethnic, racial, gender or other minority communities. Considering the disastrous effects that torture has on the lives of victims, States should do their utmost to ensure speedy access to rehabilitative services for victims of torture, including medical, psychological, legal, social and humanitarian services.

44. The Fund continues to play a fundamental role in upholding this global commitment, by enabling the right to redress for victims of torture and ensuring that their voices are heard. Since its establishment 41 years ago, the Fund has awarded more than 5,200 grants to 660 organizations, including survivor-led
organizations in more than 142 countries, for a total amount of nearly $210,000,000. In 2023 alone, the Fund awarded grants to 190 civil society organizations providing direct medical, psychological, social and legal services to over 53,380 torture survivors, including human rights defenders, political opponents, journalists, student activists, migrants and asylum-seekers, persons with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, children and women in armed conflicts, ethnic minorities and Indigenous Peoples, in 92 countries across the world.

45. In 2022, the Fund received 25 contributions, pledges and public donations for $10,008,254. Through the call for applications issued in 2023, the Fund received eligible grant applications for 2024 amounting to over $17 million in requests for support to victims of torture, a 17 per cent increase compared with the previous year. Additional income is required by the Fund in order to respond more adequately to the growing demand for support that it received from rehabilitation centres and other civil society actors worldwide, even though the actual needs of torture victims worldwide are much greater. The Board and the 16 members of the Group of Friends of the Fund appeal to Member States and other stakeholders to contribute to the Fund as a concrete manifestation of their commitment to upholding the right to redress for victims of torture and eliminating the practice.