

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today to participate in the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Committee Against Torture. Since yesterday marked the beginning of the 50th session of the Committee we are actually celebrating a double anniversary. The 50th session is – as always – heavily packed, and I would like to start by wishing the Committee a very good, productive and fruitful session.

As many of you know the fight against torture is very close to the heart of Denmark. Denmark is the main sponsor of the comprehensive omnibus torture resolution at the General Assembly and of the focused thematic resolutions on torture at the Human Rights Council. At the Human Rights Council we have in past years addressed the role and responsibility of judges, prosecutors and lawyers as well as the role and responsibility of medical and other health personnel in the context of torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment. We also present the resolutions renewing the mandate of the Special rapporteur, which include a number of substantial provisions.

This year – at its 22nd session - the Human Rights Council addressed the important issue of rehabilitation of torture victims. An issue within the subject-framework of the Committee's latest General Comment (no.3) on implementation of art. 14 of the Convention Against Torture. As main sponsor of the torture resolutions Denmark strives for resolutions that move the fight against torture forward with strong backing from Member States. And we are very happy that this year's HRC resolution gained the support of all countries and had 65 co-sponsors. This obviously adds great strength to it.

Rehabilitation of torture victims is not an easy task – and it does require resources – but it is necessary for any decent society. Full restitution is seldom possible, and many direct or indirect victims will carry physical and/or mental scars of torture for the rest of their lives. But we know that a lot can be achieved with the right treatment. In this regard, the resolution highlights the importance of full holistic and specialized rehabilitation services. However, rehabilitation is only one form of reparation. In broader terms, the resolution urges states to provide redress for victims of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading

treatment or punishment, encompassing effective remedy and adequate, effective and prompt reparation. Reparation should include restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition, taking into full account the specific needs of the victim.

The resolution uses a terminology very similar to the CAT General Comment no. 3. And Member States are also taking note of the General Comment in the resolution.

The resolution highlights the importance of States establishing, maintaining, facilitating or supporting facilities where victims can receive rehabilitation treatment; that rehabilitation services are made available without discrimination of any kind at the earliest possible stage; and the importance of adopting a victim oriented approach and placing victims and their individual needs at the center of redress procedures.

States are urged to respect the independence, duties and responsibilities of rehabilitation personnel and the confidentiality of the rehabilitation process, with the resolution also pointing to the importance of providing training for rehabilitation personnel. As an additional important element States are urged to ensure that rehabilitation personnel are not subjected to reprisals or intimidation.

On reprisals it is certainly appropriate to congratulate the two treaty bodies on torture, CAT and the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, on their role as treaty body frontrunners in creating specific mechanisms to respond to the increasingly-recognized problem of reprisals against those who cooperate or seek to cooperate with the UN and its mechanisms. [CAT rapporteur on reprisals and SPT working group].

The torture resolutions and General Comments – as gab-fillers of hard treaty law - only really matter if they are used and implemented. National and international civil society have important roles and responsibilities to make this happen.

The Committee Against Torture is of course a fundamental stakeholder in the combined effort to fight torture. One of the biggest past, present and future challenges facing CAT is unquestionably the heavy workload of the Committee. To - again - address this problem Denmark at UNGA 67 followed up on a resolution first introduced two years earlier and tabled a resolution on additional meeting time for CAT where Member States authorized the Committee to continue to meet for an additional week per session as a temporary measure, with effect from May 2013 until the end of November 2014. This was done in order to address the backlog of reports of States parties and individual complaints awaiting consideration.

But a long-term solution should be found within the framework of the wider discussion on treaty body strengthening. The daunting reality today is that the treaty bodies are suffering from their own success and are not able to work as intended. Changes are needed more urgently than ever before.

The treaty bodies must ultimately have the effect of assisting States in implementing human rights and of helping victims obtain their rights. This should not only be a vision. It needs to be reality. And to make tangible progress States must not shy away from focusing on core elements such as the quality and independence of the membership of the treaty bodies as well as the need to ensure adequate and sustainable resources. The treaty body strengthening process provides a unique opportunity for stakeholders to improve the system. This also includes making it accessible, understandable and simple.

An area where efforts have been made but improvements can never be too many is better cooperation between the various stakeholders in the fight against torture: Governments, intergovernmental institutions, such as CAT and other relevant treaty bodies and mechanisms, as well as civil society, including human rights defenders etc. We all have to strengthen our efforts in this regard. We owe that to the victims but also to ourselves and our self-respect.

Thank you.

