

Concept Note

41st session of the Board of Trustees of the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture

Public event on “Redress and rehabilitation of victims of torture: experiences learnt through the UN Fund for Victims of Torture”

*Thursday, 16 April 2015, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Room XII, Palais des Nations, Geneva*

Background:

Every day, in all continents of the world, torture and ill-treatment is being inflicted on men, women and children. Every day, victims of torture and their family members struggle to obtain redress for the violations they have been subjected to despite the fact that that redress is recognized as a right under international human rights law.

Over the last 30 years, the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture has channelled financial assistance for over US\$ 168 million to more than 620 organisations worldwide providing medical, psychological, humanitarian, social and legal assistance to victims of torture and their family members. In 2015 alone, more than 57 000 victims will be assisted by specialized practitioners from NGOs, rehabilitation centres, hospitals and legal aid groups with the critical support of the Fund.

The provision of assistance to victims of torture is a legal obligation stipulated in Article 14 of the UN Convention against Torture. More than 30 years since the establishment of the Fund for Victims of Torture, a renewed emphasis has been placed on the right of victims of torture to redress and rehabilitation, notably with the adoption by the Committee against Torture of General Comment No. 3 on Article 14, and of resolution 22/21 by the Human Rights Council on “Rehabilitation of torture victims”. Within this framework, the UN Fund for Victims of Torture is instrumental for the implementation of Article 14 of the Convention.

In its General Comment No. 3, the Committee has defined full rehabilitation as “the restoration of function or the acquisition of new skills required as a result of the changed circumstances of a victim in the aftermath of torture or ill-treatment. Rehabilitation seeks to enable the maximum possible self-sufficiency and function of the individual concerned, and may involve adjustments to the person’s physical and social environment”. Council resolution 22/21 acknowledges the role played by rehabilitation centres administered by civil society organizations and encourages States and other donors to contribute generously to the UN Fund for Victims of Torture.

At the 41st session of the Board of Trustees of the Fund (13-17 April 2015), several expert practitioners working in projects supported by the Fund will exchange among themselves and with the Trustees experiences, practices and lessons learned in the field of assistance to victims of torture, with the aim to ultimately increase the knowledge on and quality of services provided to victims.

A Public Meeting will be organized on 16 April, open to all Permanent Missions, civil society actors and media based in Geneva, to feature the expertise of the projects and expert practitioners that the Fund supports. The meeting will provide for a timely

opportunity to highlight the continuous needs and plight of thousands of victims of torture worldwide.

Objectives:

The public event, in the format of a panel discussion, will:

- Present experiences learnt through the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture and its grantees, showcasing the concrete work on rehabilitation on the ground;
- Inform about innovative and successful approaches undertaken with the support of the UN Fund;
- Emphasise the value of redress and rehabilitation of victims of torture as a core component in the fight against torture, in particular its impact on the individual, the family and the societal level.

Panellists:

- *Mr. Morad El Shazly*, Chairperson, Board of Trustees, UN Fund for Victims of Torture;
- *H.E. Ms Marta Maurás Pérez*, Permanent Representative of Chile (on behalf of the Convention against Torture Initiative CTI);
- *Ms. Suzanne Jabbour*, RESTART - Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture, Lebanon;
- *Ms Lin Piwowarczyk*, Boston Medical Centre, USA;
- *Ms Felicitas Treue*, CCTI - Colectivo Contra la Tortura y la Impunidad A.C., Mexico;
- *Mr. Peter Kiama*, Executive Director, IMLU - Independent Medico Legal Unit, Kenya.

- Other Experts will be present in the room:

- *Mr. Alessio Bruni*, Member of the Committee against Torture.

- *Ms Radhia Nasraoui*, President, OCTT - Organisation Contre la Torture en Tunisie, Tunisia ;

- *Ms Camelia Doru*, Director, ICAR Foundation - Medical Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Survivors, Romania;

- *Ms Jasna Zečević*, President and Director, Association VIVE ŽENE, Bosnia & Herzegovina;

- *Mr. Norberto Liwski*, President, CODESEDH - Comité para la Defensa de la Salud, la Etica y los Derechos Humanos, Argentina;

- *Mr. Ahmed Mohammed Amin Ahmed*, Executive Director, WCHAN - Organization for Victims of Human Rights Violations, Iraq;

- *Ms. Simone van der Kaaden*, Country Director, CVT - The Center for Victims of Torture, Jordan;

- *Mr. Sotheara Chhim*, Executive Director, TPO - Transcultural Psychosocial Organization, Cambodia;

- *Mr. Philip Grant*, Director, TRIAL – Track Impunity Always, Switzerland;

Interpretation in all UN languages will be provided.