

1234th Permanent Council of the OSCE, 4 July 2019

Joint-Statement Marking the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

Madam Chair,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of 47 participating States: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, the European Union and its Member States, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Republic of Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, San Marino, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and the United States of America.

On 26 June, the international community marked the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. On this occasion, we jointly reaffirm our strong commitment to the prevention and eradication of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. We express our solidarity with, and support for, the hundreds of thousands of victims and survivors of torture and their families throughout the world, many of whom remain unacknowledged and unsupported.

Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment are not only prohibited under international law and OSCE commitments, under all circumstances, at any time and in any place whatsoever. Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment are also counterproductive in safeguarding national security, as their pervasive consequences go beyond the isolated act, generate distrust in democratic institutions and can breed new cycles of violence and instability. Finally, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment destroy the dignity of the individual, leaving many with a sense of guilt and social isolation that remains throughout their lifetime, as emphasized by ODIHR Director Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir in ODIHRs press release on 26 June.

We are deeply concerned that torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, as well as enforced disappearances, persist in the OSCE region. We must intensify our efforts in preventing such acts, prosecuting the perpetrators, identifying the victims and ensuring effective redress, including compensation, rehabilitation and guarantees of non-repetition. A victim centric approach should be at the basis of those efforts.

Madam Chair,

All OSCE participating States have ratified the UN Convention against Torture, and full and effective implementation is a mandatory first step. Furthermore, we advocate for the participating States to consider signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention, which obligates States to establish or maintain effective National Preventive Mechanisms to monitor places of detention.

Madam Chair,

On 5 June, the international conference *Effective Multilateralism in the Fight Against Torture: Trends in the OSCE region and the Way Forward* gathered leading international experts, representatives from international and regional organisations, civil society organisations as well as participating States to jointly identify the way ahead in order to make torture and other ill-treatment a matter of the past in the OSCE region. The conference was organized by Denmark, Switzerland and Austria in cooperation with the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship and ODIHR and was co-sponsored by a total of 42 participating States. The discussions clearly underlined the importance of joining forces and increasing the dialogue, in order to ensure complementary approaches and further effectiveness of our efforts. While the primary responsibility stays with States, human rights defenders, civil society organisations and multilateral anti-torture mechanisms play equally important roles in our shared efforts in the fight against torture.

The OSCE is in a unique strategic position to address many of the persisting challenges in the fight against torture, both at the political level and on the ground. We welcome in particular ODIHR's role in assisting participating States in their efforts to implement our shared commitments in the area of torture prevention, which provides substantial added value to the international efforts.

We continue to strongly support ODIHR for its great effort and internationally recognized expertise.

In closing, we jointly reaffirm our strong commitment to step up our efforts in the area of prevention and eradication of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The topic must remain high on the OSCE agenda and we believe that it is

time to renew our efforts by strengthening our shared OSCE commitments on torture prevention.

Thank you for your attention.