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Agenda item 2

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the  
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

## United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

The present report, which complements the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture submitted to the General Assembly at its seventy-first session (A/71/289), provides information on the activities of the Fund and describes in particular the recommendations for grants adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Fund at its forty-fourth session, held in Geneva from 3 to 7 October 2016.

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## **I. Introduction**

### **A. Submission of the report**

1. The present report was prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/146 and complements the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (A/71/289). It contains updated information on the activities of the Fund, in particular the recommendations adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Fund at its forty-fourth session, held in Geneva from 3 to 7 October 2016.

### **B. Mandate of the Fund**

2. The Fund receives voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals. In accordance with the mandate of the Fund outlined in General Assembly resolution 36/151 and the practices established by the Board of Trustees since 1982, the Fund provides grants to established channels of assistance, including non-governmental organizations, associations of victims and of family members of victims, private and public hospitals, legal clinics and public interest law firms that submit project proposals aimed at the provision of medical, psychological, social, financial, legal, humanitarian or other forms of direct assistance to victims of torture and members of their families.

### **C. Administration of the Fund and composition of the 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 to equitable geographical distribution and in consultation with their Governments. The Board is currently composed of Maria Cristina Nunes de Mendonça (Portugal), Morad el-Shazly (Egypt), Anastasia Pinto (India), Mikolaj Pietrzak (Poland) and Gaby Oré Aguilar (Peru).

## **II. Management of grants**

### **A. Admissibility criteria**

4. Project admissibility criteria are outlined in the guidelines of the Fund. The guidelines require a project proposal to be presented by an established channel of assistance, including non-governmental organizations, associations of victims and of family members of victims, private and public hospitals, legal clinics and public interest law firms. The beneficiaries must be victims of torture and/or their family members. Priority is given to projects providing direct assistance to torture victims, which may consist of medical or psychological assistance, help with social or financial reintegration as well as various forms of legal assistance for victims or members of their families, including assistance in seeking redress or applying for asylum. As a general rule, projects are supported on a yearly basis for a maximum of 10 years, subject to a satisfactory evaluation of the project and availability of funds.

5. Subject to availability of funds, the Fund may also support projects seeking to organize training or capacity-building activities for health-care professionals or other service providers, with priority given to applicant organizations that have an ongoing direct assistance project supported by the Fund. These projects may take the form of trainings, workshops, seminars and conferences and peer-to-peer staff exchanges. They are to be conducted primarily for the benefit of the professional staff of the applicant organization. Grant requests for projects involving investigation, research, studies, publications or other similar activities are not admissible.

6. Outside of the regular grants cycle and subject to availability of funds, the Fund can also provide emergency assistance to project proposals submitted through the emergency intersessional procedure, outlined in the guidelines for the Fund. Emergency grants may be awarded in exceptional circumstances such as a sudden increase in the number of victims of torture to be assisted owing to a humanitarian crisis, including armed conflict, war or natural disaster, subject to availability of funds. Emergency grants may also be awarded when such crisis results in a grave situation that makes it impossible for an organization to continue to provide assistance to beneficiaries (e.g., destruction of premises or offices), for the purpose of enabling the organization to resume its activities.

## **B. Monitoring and evaluation of grants**

7. As a rule, pre-screening visits to projects are undertaken before a grant is awarded to a new project proposal. Regular monitoring visits to ongoing projects for which the renewed support of the Fund is being sought are also conducted to assess the implementation and impact of the projects funded. An internal guide on conducting visits to projects that have been funded, or are to be funded, was developed in 2013 by the secretariat of the Fund to enhance verification methodology and ensure coherence in the evaluation process. In 2016, a total of 57 projects were visited, including by the secretariat of the Fund, OHCHR field presences and members of the Board.

## **III. Financial situation of the Fund**

8. The Board, in close coordination with the secretariat of the Fund and the Donors and External Relations Section of OHCHR, seeks to secure yearly a more satisfactory level of contributions from donors, which is needed to respond to the current realities of victims of torture and their family members worldwide. An average income of \$12 million would be necessary to respond adequately to the requests for assistance received by the Fund from rehabilitation centres and redress programmes worldwide. Over the last three years, the Fund has managed to secure an average yearly income of \$9 million.

9. The table below shows the contributions and pledges received in 2016 as of the time of writing. Regrettably, the prospects for attaining the level of income achieved in recent years are not as positive as they were at the time of writing. As at the forty-fourth session of the Board, at which grants were recommended for 2017, the Fund had a net total of \$8,306,949 available for activities, including grants, to be implemented in the course of 2017.

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**Contributions and pledges received from 1 January to 5 December 2016**


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<i>Donor</i>	<i>Amount</i> <i>(United States dollars)</i>	<i>Date of receipt</i>
<b>Contributions</b>		
Andorra	11 099	29 July 2016
Argentina	15 000	1 March 2016
Austria	21 231	1 December 2016
Canada	44 148	17 February 2016
Chile	5 000	6 May 2016
Denmark	447 890	16 March 2016
France	22 676	31 May 2016
Germany	445 931	7 June 2016
	207 609	21 November 2016
Holy See	2 000	17 October 2016
India	25 000	15 January 2016
Ireland	39 459	19 April 2016
Kuwait	10 000	23 February 2016
Liechtenstein	25 075	8 March 2016
Luxembourg	16 760	23 August 2016
Norway	95 270	20 June 2016
Peru	1 470	3 August 2016
Saudi Arabia	75 000	3 June 2016
United Arab Emirates	10 000	25 February 2016
United States of America	5 696 312	24 October 2016
<b>Total contributions</b>	<b>7 216 930</b>	
<b>Pledges</b>		
Mexico	10 000	24 May 2016
Switzerland	202 840	10 November 2016
United States of America	6 550 000	21 September 2016
<b>Total pledges</b>	<b>6 762 840</b>	

#### IV. Forty-fourth session of the Board of Trustees

10. The forty-fourth session of the Board was held in Geneva from 3 to 7 October 2016. The Board examined applications for funding and made recommendations on grants to be awarded to beneficiary organizations for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017.

11. The amount available for distribution to projects was calculated after deducting programme support costs, the operating cash reserve and the expenditure for non-grant activities from the total amount of contributions received since the forty-second session of the Board, held in October 2015.

12. At the forty-fourth session, the Board, with the assistance of the secretariat, reviewed a total of 220 admissible project applications aimed at providing direct assistance

to victims of torture and their families, as well as — to a lesser extent — training and capacity-building in the field of rehabilitation, amounting to a total request of \$15,303,910.

13. In line with the grant-making procedure set out at its forty-third session (see A/71/289, paragraphs 6-8), the Board accepted a total of 173 projects to be implemented in 75 countries for a total amount of \$7,117,500. Of those projects, 166 are for the delivery of direct assistance services to victims of torture and 7 are for strengthening the delivery capacity of such services (training and capacity-building). With the vital financial assistance of the Fund, it is expected that more than 45,000 victims and their families will have access to rehabilitation in all regions of the world in the course of 2017.

14. All project proposals were reviewed on a competitive basis, taking into account the merit and documented needs of each proposal and its complementarity with other initiatives, as well as the number of years of continuous support by the Fund to the same project.

15. The Board also recommended setting aside an additional \$500,000 to respond to emergency assistance requests that may be received in 2017 through the intersessional procedure of the Fund.

16. Through its enhanced emergency procedure, in 2016 the Fund was able to provide rapid financial support in the amount of \$150,900 for the relief of victims of torture in the context of unfolding crisis. Emergency grants were awarded to provide vital rehabilitation services in Nigeria, South Sudan, Thailand and the State of Palestine.

17. In the face of these emergency requests, the Board remained concerned about the upsurge in the use of torture, in particular in the context of violent extremism and unprecedented levels of forced displacement and migration worldwide, and recalled that States had the obligation under international law to provide redress and rehabilitation to victims of torture. The Board was also concerned at situations of reprisals against a number of the Fund's grantees who were attempting to provide rehabilitation to victims of torture and assist them in their path to obtain redress for the violations they had endured.

18. The Board also recommended giving special attention to project proposals focusing on: (a) early identification of victims of torture and their access to medical, legal, social and psychological services; (b) innovative strategic litigation initiatives; (c) victims of torture in territories controlled by non-State actors; (d) rehabilitation for women and children who were victims of torture; and (e) initiatives operating in contexts of restricted civil society space. Moreover, for the 2017 call for applications, the Board identified as priorities countries in the Middle East and North Africa; countries that were members of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (in particular Brazil); and countries in Central Asia.

19. During the forty-fourth session, the Board held a joint session with the Chair of the Committee against Torture, Jens Modvig, and the Chair of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Malcolm Evans. The newly appointed Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment could not attend owing to other commitments. The meeting was another step towards consolidating a cohesive United Nations anti-torture front in the face of the persistence of torture and ill-treatment, one of the main elements in the mission statement of the Fund adopted in 2014. Agreement was reached on holding joint thematic meetings on a yearly basis, inviting the Fund to the annual meeting of the Committee and the Subcommittee and exploring the possibility of extending an invitation to the Fund to participate in the interactive dialogue of the anti-torture mechanisms at the General Assembly. The Fund was acknowledged as the one mechanism available to make the right to rehabilitation and redress for victims a reality.

20. The Board also met with the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, Nevena Vučković-Šahović. The two humanitarian funds are managed by a joint secretariat team at OHCHR. During the comprehensive exchange issues of common interest were discussed, in particular the challenges in implementing a sustainable victim-centred approach. The Trustees agreed to joint efforts to bring greater visibility to these unique victim-centred mandates. The Trustees also expressed appreciation for the managerial improvements put in place since the creation of a joint secretariat team in 2012, while recommending that its staffing level be restored to the level of 2014 (before the staffing cuts introduced by OHCHR to face its budget shortfall in 2014).

21. In line with its objective to make the Fund a platform for knowledge-sharing and expertise in the field of rehabilitation and redress for victims, the Board recommended that the secretariat organize a thematic workshop on torture and migration at its forty-fifth session, to be held in April 2017, to which selected experts and practitioners would be invited to present their research and experience. The findings of the last expert workshop, on redress and rehabilitation of child and adolescent victims of torture and the intergenerational transmission of trauma, are contained in document A/71/289.

## V. Making a contribution

22. Governments, non-governmental organizations and other public and private entities are encouraged to contribute to the Fund. It is important to note that only specifically earmarked contributions are attributed to the Fund. For more information on how to contribute and details about the Fund, donors are requested to contact the secretariat of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland; e-mail: unvft@ohchr.org; telephone: +41 22 917 9376; fax: +41 22 917 9017.

## VI. Conclusions and recommendations

23. **The contexts and crises in which torture takes place have become more complex in recent years, resulting in an increasing number of victims, including children and adolescents. The need for redress and rehabilitation has become more pressing than ever.**

24. **The Board is concerned at the rampant use of torture, as well as at a growing and shocking narrative favouring, condoning, and even inciting the use of torture. The Board is also preoccupied at situations of reprisals against a number of the Fund's grantees. The Board continues to pursue close coordination with the other United Nations mechanisms against torture, firmly convinced that a strengthened United Nations anti-torture front is necessary to work effectively towards the full eradication of torture.**

25. **As the Secretary-General recalled in his statement of 26 June 2016 on the occasion of the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture is often a lifeline and a last resort when States neglect their obligation to prevent torture and fail to provide victims with effective and prompt redress, including appropriate forms of rehabilitation.**

26. **Notwithstanding a slight decrease in the income of the Fund secured for 2017, the Board has recommended the funding of more than 170 projects in 75 countries across the world in 2017. It has also set aside funding for emergency applications, to**

be received through the intersessional emergency procedure of the Fund, in order to respond rapidly to new and emergency requests for assistance, in particular in the context of unfolding humanitarian crises.

27. The Board also holds the view that in the light of the increasing challenges described in the present report, there is a need to facilitate knowledge-sharing among rehabilitation practitioners. The Fund serves as a platform for sharing expertise in this field by holding annual thematic workshops. The next such workshop will be on the subject of torture and migration, and will be held in Geneva in April 2017.

28. The Secretary-General appeals to Member States and other stakeholders to contribute to the Fund, noting that contributing to the Fund is a concrete manifestation of the commitment of States to the elimination of torture, in line with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, in particular its article 14. The Fund would need to receive \$12 million (against the present annual income of almost \$9 million) on a yearly basis to respond adequately to the high demands for assistance.

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