

## CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Chair, distinguished representatives, delegates and participants, NPM colleagues,

I want to start out my intervention with a word of gratitude.

Not a week has gone by since we established the Norwegian NPM in 2014 under the auspices of the Norwegian Parliamentary Ombudsman when I do not send warm regards to the founding mothers of the OPCAT.

They have given us a mandate with powers and flexibility to pursue the aim of preventing torture and ill-treatment in all places of detention, across all sectors, including in health and social welfare.

I will, briefly, go through **some of the strategic choices we have made**, some of the achievements we have so far noted – and some of the challenges ahead.

Firstly, being part of the Parliamentary Ombudsman has given us independence and authority – two key assets in building legitimacy vis-a-vis detainees and putting strength behind our recommendations vis-a-vis places and state authorities.

Secondly, we chose to build an interdisciplinary team, presently consisting of three lawyers, four social scientists with competence within sociology, criminology, human rights and communication, and a psychologist. This gives us a wide variety of competences but also an array of methodologies to draw from.

Thirdly, we have chosen to further strengthen the implementation of OPCAT art 18 through an advisory committee consisting of 15 members of different civil society groups and academia, and by using external experts to specific visits.

Fourthly, we have, so far, decided to choose quality over quantity in our visit methodology. What does this mean?

We do in-depth visits, mostly 3 days – depending on the size of the place. During visits we maintain a holistic but also flexible approach – if we discover particular risk factors or practices that need to be investigated further we readjust both in terms of thematic focus and methodology. When, for instance, we found traces of troubling practices at a psychiatric hospital some months ago, we decided to study more thoroughly the institutional culture of the place, by increasing the numbers of employee and patients interviews as well as to go back and make a full visit of a night shift.

From the onset we have made comprehensive visit reports that are published about 10 days after the administration at the places of detention have received them, for transparency as well as legitimacy. The visit reports also constitute a solid platform for follow-up.

Prioritizing quality over quantity is hard as it means we are doing fewer visits. However, if we are to be efficient in prevention it is our belief that we should also have capacity to give lectures, to do training and outreach activities, etc.

### **A very quick scan over some of our achievements;**

Following visits to prisons the Directorate of Correctional Services has issued guidelines to all prisons securing that prisoners should never be naked in a security cell and to strengthen the routines on body searches to avoid humiliating procedures. The same directorate, has included several of NPM recommendations in its new regulation on the use of isolation in prisons. Similarly, the Police Directorate in its new national regulation on police arrests has included a significant number of the NPM recommendations, including on body searches and suicide prevention.

A unique feature of the OPCAT is the ability for the NPM to work across sectors and to bring knowledge and best practices from one sector to another. Being fully informed about the reason for the use of coercive measures is a prerequisite for any person to be able to make use of legal safeguards including complaints mechanisms. When we started our visits to the hospitals we were quite surprised to find that patients routinely were given less information about decisions on the use of coercive measures than prisoners. As a consequence of our visits to hospitals the Directorate of Health issued a new national directive on the right of patients to routinely receive the written grounds for decisions on the use of coercive measures, as well as strengthened routines for the oversight bodies, the so called Control Commissions.

### **Some of the challenges ahead;**

Immunity, confidentiality and the detention of prisoners abroad are a few of the challenges where we as NPM have received invaluable assistance from SPT in the form of advisory opinions.

A main challenge will remain capacity – there will always be more to be done, it is in the very nature of our job. But NPMs should be able to have impact also outside the place visited, and thus bring about change in other places and other sectors as well. We think of this as creating ripples on water. Transparency and outreach in numerous ways therefore always supplement visits as our working mode.

I started out this short intervention by expressing gratitude and enthusiasm about the OPCAT and working in an NPM. In my view, the OPCAT with its triangular partnership of states, SPT and NPMs has proven to be a tremendous tool for prevention of torture and ill-treatment.

However, monitoring places of detention takes its toll on personnel. I want to end by reminding us that we also need to make sure we are able to take care of NPM personnel

carrying out a vital part of the OPCAT to avoid monitoring fatigue and ensure a continued fight against torture and ill-treatment that is both local and global.

Thank you.