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**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 (A/75/316), provides information on the activities of the Fund and describes in particular the recommendations adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Fund at its fifty-first session (7 July 2020) and fifty-second session (5 to 9 October 2020), both held remotely.



## **I. Introduction**

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

1. The present report was prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/163 and complements the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the activities of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (A/75/316).

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

2. The Fund may receive 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, in particular 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. On 5 August 2020, the Secretary-General extended the term of Sara Hossain (Bangladesh), Lawrence Murugu Mute (Kenya) and Vivienne Nathanson (Chair, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), until 20 October 2023. The Secretary-General appointed Juan E. Méndez (Argentina) and Vladimir Jović (Bosnia and Herzegovina) to replace Gaby Oré Aguilar (Peru) and Mikołaj Pietrzak (Poland), respectively, whose mandates ended on 9 July and 20 October 2020.

## **II. Management of grants**

### **A. Admissibility criteria**

4. Project admissibility criteria are outlined for applicants and grantees in the guidelines of the Fund. The guidelines require a project proposal to be presented by an established channel of assistance. The beneficiaries must be victims of torture and/or their family members. Priority is given to annual projects providing direct assistance to torture victims and their families, which may consist of medical or psychological assistance, social or financial rehabilitation, or various forms of legal advice, including support in seeking redress. As a general rule, projects are awarded on a yearly basis for a maximum of 10 consecutive years, subject to a satisfactory evaluation of the project and the availability of funds. The guidelines of the Fund nonetheless clarify that, on an exceptional basis, grantees receiving financial support beyond 10 years can continue to be supported if, in addition to consistent high-level performance, they play a prominent

and significant role in the anti-torture movement, or they provide essential services to victims of torture in contexts in which no other organization offers similar services.<sup>1</sup>

5. Subject to availability of funds, the Fund also supports annual projects aimed at strengthening the development and/or capacity of individuals, organizations or specialized networks to ensure specialized provision of direct assistance to torture survivors and their family members. Such projects may take the form of training, workshops, seminars or conferences, peer-to-peer training or staff exchanges that would result in an increased capacity to deliver professional care to victims of torture. They are to be conducted primarily for the benefit of the professional staff of the applicant organization.

6. Outside of the annual grants cycle described above and depending on the availability of funds, the Fund also provides emergency assistance to projects submitted on a rolling basis through an intersessional procedure, as outlined in the guidelines of the Fund. Emergency grants may be awarded in exceptional circumstances, such as an extraordinary increase in the number of victims of torture to be assisted owing to a sudden change in circumstances, such as a human rights or humanitarian crisis, social protests or armed conflict, which would require an immediate response. Emergency grants may also be awarded to current grantees subject to restrictive or retaliatory measures, such as reprisals for collaborating with the United Nations, as a result of their annual project implementation, if additional measures are required to continue to deliver assistance to torture victims under such circumstances.

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

7. The Fund secretariat conducts a thorough evaluation of all grant applications through a desk review. In addition, as part of the evaluation process, it arranges, as a rule, an on-site visit to organizations submitting a project proposal for the first time. 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 funds provided. An internal guide on conducting visits to projects that have been funded, or are to be funded, has been developed by the secretariat to ensure coherence in the evaluation process.

8. Owing to travel restrictions associated with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, all on-site visits were cancelled in 2020. The Fund secretariat organized, however, remote evaluation meetings for organizations submitting proposals for the first time or following a funding gap, in the case of projects that had been pre-approved for funding for 2021 by the Board of Trustees at its fifty-second session. The current arrangements for remote contact will continue until the said travel restrictions are lifted.

## **III. Impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic and response of the Fund**

### **A. Secretariat**

9. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 has had an impact on the administration of the Fund. The adjustments made to its working methods and grants management to adapt to the global pandemic generated an additional workload. The Fund secretariat nonetheless continued to operate uninterrupted remotely. Furthermore, the fellowship programme, although delayed by four months, was ultimately carried forward, with two young professionals from human rights organizations from the African and Eastern European regions joining the secretariat in August 2020.

<sup>1</sup> Guidelines of the Fund ([www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Torture/UNVFVT/Call/guidelinesTortureFund2019revised49thsessionFINALENG.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Torture/UNVFVT/Call/guidelinesTortureFund2019revised49thsessionFINALENG.pdf)), para. 14.

## **B. Board of Trustees**

10. The fifty-first session of the Board of Trustees of the Fund, scheduled to be held from 30 March to 3 April 2020 in Geneva, was postponed as a result of the said travel and associated restrictions following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic to 7 July 2020, in a remote format. The sixth annual expert workshop and panel discussion on the theme “Practitioners on the frontline: enabling civic space to assist torture survivors”, planned for 1 and 2 April 2020 during the session, was also cancelled.

11. The Board of Trustees nevertheless continued to exercise its advisory function through active intersessional engagement. The Board guided the Fund’s strategic response to COVID-19 to ensure that torture victims assisted by its grantees continued to receive direct services and did not become even more susceptible to the effects of the virus. The Board held an intersessional call on 16 April 2020 to outline a preliminary response strategy.

12. On 7 July 2020, the Board held its fifty-first session remotely, at which it adopted its COVID-19 response strategy, involving funding flexibility for the implementation of 2020 annual grants, specific criteria to guide recommendations on 2021 annual grants and an emergency grants special call. Other policy-related decisions originally scheduled for the postponed session, notably the adoption of the revised guidelines, were also addressed (see paras. 24–28 below).

13. The Board of Trustees also held its fifty-second session remotely, from 5 to 9 October 2020, with the main focus on determining funding for 2020 annual grants (see paras. 24–28).

## **C. Grants management**

14. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Fund’s project beneficiaries compelled the Board of Trustees, with the assistance of the Fund secretariat, to seek ways to implement a flexible approach to grants management while maintaining full accountability for project implementation. Guided by the proposal for flexible funding in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic endorsed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee,<sup>2</sup> the Fund strove to apply agile and timely methods to respond to the rapidly evolving needs of its beneficiaries. The Board decided in particular to pool all savings made from COVID-19 travel restrictions for the benefit of torture victims most affected by the pandemic through a special call for emergency grants.

15. In the case of annual grants awarded in 2020, the Board afforded organizations a certain degree of flexibility to reprogramme activities in response to shifting needs, provided that the outcome of direct support for torture victims was maintained. Modalities included flexibility to make adjustments to budget lines and the option of requesting more time for project implementation through no-cost extensions.

16. The secretariat at the same time continued to maintain oversight, due diligence and accountability for all awarded grants in this unprecedented context through financial and narrative reports and independent audit reports. It also continued to maintain regular contact with grantees and requested periodic updates on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on project implementation, in particular by means of a survey issued on 12 May 2020. Looking into 2021, the secretariat will continue to seek ways to adopt simplified risk management processes, finding alternative ways to carry out assessments, wherever possible through remote procedures.

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<sup>2</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee, “Proposal for a harmonized approach to funding flexibility in the context of COVID-19”, IASC Results Group 5 on Humanitarian Financing (June 2020).

## D. Emergency grants procedure

17. The emergency grants procedure allows the Fund to expedite the granting of grants in the event of a surge in the needs of torture victims for immediate services as a direct result of a sudden change in circumstances, notably in the context of a human rights or humanitarian crisis. The savings made as a result of COVID-19-related travel restrictions, in particular the cancellation of in-person Board sessions and on-site visits, and the postponement of the fellowship programme, were allocated to emergency grants.

18. In 2020, the Fund mobilized its emergency grants procedure for the benefit of torture victims disproportionately affected by the pandemic. On 20 July, the secretariat launched a special call for COVID-19 emergency grants, open to 2020 grantees who had expressed interest, in a survey, for projects in locations with high infection rates to assist target groups with high vulnerabilities (such as persons on the move or deprived of liberty).

19. As a result, the Fund awarded 17 emergency grants to address the needs of victims of torture disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, benefiting a total of 3,623 torture survivors (\$265,000). The Fund also awarded an additional seven emergency grants, not directly related to the consequences of the pandemic, benefiting a total of 773 torture survivors (\$265,000). In 2020, a total of 24 emergency grants (amounting to \$530,000) were awarded. Through the emergency grants, an estimated 4,396 torture survivors will receive medical, psychological, social and legal services in 23 countries in every region of the world.

## IV. Financial situation of the Fund

20. Over the past four years, the Fund has secured an average yearly income of between \$8 and \$9 million. In 2019, the Fund received 31 contributions and public donations amounting to for \$9,225,448. In 2020, the Fund has to date received 20 contributions, pledges and public donations amounting to \$10,243,929. The Board of Trustees welcomed all the contributions and pledges made, including the increased contribution of \$1.5 million from the United States of America (from \$6.5 million in 2019 to \$8 million in 2020).

21. The Board of Trustees, in close coordination with the secretariat of the Fund and the Donors and External Relations Section of OHCHR, seeks to increase contributions from donors, which are needed to respond to the current realities of victims of torture and their family members worldwide. It is estimated that a minimum yearly income of \$12 million is necessary for the Fund to respond adequately to the project applications that it currently receives from rehabilitation centres and other civil society actors, and represents only a fraction of total needs for rehabilitation of torture victims worldwide.

22. As at the fifty-second session, the Fund had a net \$9,131,385 available to be awarded for activities, mainly for grants to support critical services to victims of torture and their family members, to be implemented in the course of 2021.

### Contributions and pledges received from 1 January to 4 December 2020

<i>Donor</i>	<i>Amount (United States dollars)</i>	<i>Date of receipt</i>
<b>Contributions</b>		
Andorra	11 737	16 October 2020
Austria	33 936	18 March 2020
Canada (including a contribution of \$21,332 from the Government of Quebec)	44 058	9 March 2020
	21 332	26 May 2020

<i>Donor</i>	<i>Amount (United States dollars)</i>	<i>Date of receipt</i>
Denmark	751 701	20 March 2020
France	70 588	6 August 2020
Germany	223 964	7 July 2020
India	50 000	18 February 2020
Kuwait	10 000	11 February 2020
Liechtenstein	26 567	23 June 2020
Luxembourg	17 605	21 October 2020
Norway	314 282	10 July 2020
Pakistan	5 000	12 August 2020
Peru	1 086	7 February 2020
United States of America	8 000 000	28 September 2020
<b>Total contributions</b>	<b>9 581 856</b>	
<b>Pledges</b>		
Czechia	8 562	14 October 2020
Germany	313 872	2 December 2020
Italy	29 617	19 November 2020
Saudi Arabia	100 000	26 November 2020
Switzerland	200 000	3 December 2020
<b>Total pledges</b>	<b>652 051</b>	
<b>Public donations</b>		
Public donations	10 022	
<b>Total public donations</b>	<b>10 022</b>	
<b>Total contributions, pledges and public donations</b>	<b>10 243 929</b>	

## V. Fifty-first session of the Board of Trustees

23. The Board of Trustees held its fifty-first session remotely on 7 July 2020. Board members Vivienne Nathanson (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Chair), Sara Hossain (Bangladesh), Lawrence Murugu Mute (Kenya), Mikolaj Pietrzak (Poland) and Gaby Oré Aguilar (Peru) attended the session. During the period preceding the session, the Board actively exercised its advisory function online in response to the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic.

24. During the session, the Board adopted a revised and more comprehensive version of the Fund guidelines. It also held a discussion on how to encourage the financial sustainability and diversification of funding sources for some of the Fund's grantees. The Board focused most of its policy discussion on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Fund's operations. The COVID-19 response strategy adopted by the Board was based on a three-pronged approach: flexibility in the implementation of 2020 annual grants; making a special call for COVID-19 emergency grants; and adopting specific criteria for selecting 2021 annual grants.

25. The response strategy was based on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Fund's 171 grantees and project beneficiaries. A needs assessment conducted by the secretariat on the basis of a survey held on 12 May 2020 confirmed that torture survivors faced a disproportionate risk of contracting the virus, enduring its economic, social and political consequences and suffering re-traumatization. The survey also revealed that the organizations and staff members delivering services to survivors were themselves under

strain. Although most grantees reported business continuity through innovate working methods, they also reported on the challenges that encountered, such as limited access to project beneficiaries, staff exposure to secondary trauma and human rights violations, and retaliation measures associated with states of emergency declared in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, among others.

26. The survey also revealed shifts in the needs of torture survivors, requiring consequent programming and budget modifications. Grantees notably reported a 40 per cent increase in demand for humanitarian assistance and a 17 per cent increase in demand for psychological services. The first COVID-19 policy decision therefore related to addressing shifting needs in the context of the implementation of 2020 annual grants. In accordance with the guidance proposal on funding flexibility in the context of COVID-19 (see para. 14 above), the Board of Trustees approved, upon request, the possibility of granting budget adjustments and no-cost extensions to grantees for the implementation of their 2020 grants. As at 4 December 2020, 36 grantees had requested budget adjustments and 26 had requested no-cost extensions of up to four months for 2020 annual grants.

27. The same needs assessment survey indicated that more than half Fund grantees (68 out of 128) required additional emergency funding as a result of the global pandemic, amounting to nearly \$1 million in additional funding requests. The Board of Trustees therefore decided to channel \$150,000, initially allocated to travel expenses in 2020 and not spent owing to COVID-19-related travel restrictions, to increase the budget line of emergency grants from the \$400,000 originally budgeted in 2020, bringing the total amount for emergency grants in 2020 to \$650,000. The Board also approved specific criteria to launch a special call for COVID-19 emergency grants, in particular for geographic areas with high infection rates and for target groups with high vulnerabilities (such as persons on the move or deprived of liberty).

28. The third policy issue relating to the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for the Fund's work addressed the criteria that the Board would adopt to guide its decisions on annual grants allocations for 2021 in order to guide the decision-making process adopted during its fifty-second session, scheduled for 5 to 9 October 2020 (see paras. 29–35 below). In order to continue to support partners in the midst of the pandemic, the Board decided that it would, exceptionally, recommend all applicants already funded in 2020 for funding in 2021, except in cases of non-compliance. Given that direct assessment by on-site evaluation visit was not possible in 2020, the Board also decided, on an exceptional basis, to recommend annual grants in 2021 for organizations applying for the first time or following a funding gap, when the projects in question featured value-added elements, such as constituting the only access to services in a given country.

## **VI. Fifty-second session of the Board of Trustees**

29. The Board of Trustees held its fifty-second session remotely from 5 to 9 October 2020. Board members Vivienne Nathanson (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Chair), Sara Hossain (Bangladesh), Juan E. Méndez (Argentina), Lawrence Murugu Mute (Kenya) and Mikolaj Pietrzak (Poland) attended the session.

30. The Board reviewed a total of 254 admissible annual project applications received under the call for applications for projects to be implemented from 1 January to 31 December 2021. Of the annual applications considered, 238 were for the delivery of direct assistance services to victims of torture and their families, and 16 were for training and capacity-building in the field of rehabilitation. In accordance with its COVID-19 response strategy, the Board decided to prioritize grants to projects already funded in 2020.

31. In accordance with the procedure for the allocation of grants set out at its forty-fifth session (A/72/278, paras. 5-8), the Board recommended that a total of 166 annual grants should be awarded for 2021. Of these, the Board recommended 160 annual direct assistance grants for current applicants (\$6,794,000) and six annual training and seminar grants (\$180,000). In addition, the Board pre-approved 14 annual direct assistance grants to first-time and returning applicants (\$450,000) pending a satisfactory remote meeting with the

secretariat. Through these projected 180 annual grants (amounting to \$7,424,000), an estimated 47,535 torture survivors would receive medical, psychological, social, legal and humanitarian services in 79 countries. The Board maintained a geographic balance similar to that of the previous year:

- 27 per cent of projects located in Western Europe and other States (noting that majority of project beneficiaries are persons on the move from other regions)
- 25 per cent in Asia-Pacific
- 17 per cent in Africa
- 17 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean
- 14 per cent in Eastern Europe

32. The Board also observed that obstructions and reprisals against grantees continued in the context of shrinking civic space (including during COVID-19-related states of emergency), hindering at times the exercise of the Fund's mandate to channel assistance to civil society organizations in a safe manner. The Board had originally decided to focus its 2020 annual workshop for knowledge-sharing among practitioners on this issue; the event, however, had to be cancelled because of the global pandemic, and the Board consequently determined to reconvene the event in a remote format in 2021. The topic of shrinking civic space was also identified as a thematic priority for the call for 2022 annual applications (see para. 33 below).

33. The Board hosted an online briefing for the "Group of Friends", convened by the co-chairs of the Group, Denmark and Georgia. Members welcomed the Fund's COVID-19 response strategy, in particular the channelling of savings towards new grants in light of the increased needs to torture survivors. They also agreed to work towards expanding the Fund's donor base and to use the Fund's 40th anniversary in 2021 as an opportunity to advocate for the rehabilitation of torture victims in general and for the Fund in particular (see para. 38 below).

34. For the call for 2022 applications, open from 15 January to 1 March 2021, the Board approved a number of interrelated thematic priorities. The first priority was for project proposals assisting victims of torture and intersecting discrimination, with a focus on indigenous peoples, minorities, LGBTI persons, persons with disabilities, women and girls. The second priority was for organizations working in a regime of restrictive or retaliatory measures, including reprisals due to collaboration with the United Nations. The third priority was for project proposals assisting victims of torture as a result of excessive use of force by law enforcement and security forces, in particular in the context of protests.

35. Recalling that the Fund would celebrate its fortieth anniversary in 2021, the Board adjusted its programme of activities for anniversary celebrations in the light of the constraints imposed by the pandemic, and recommended that commemorations run from 26 June (International Day in Support of Victims of Torture) to 16 December 2021 (the anniversary date of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 36/151 establishing the Fund), through to 26 June 2022. The anniversary campaign would have the aim of telling the story of the Fund through a compilation of stories and voices of torture survivors assisted by the Fund from around the world during the past four decades. In addition, a number of events, workshops or webinars would be organized in collaboration with OHCHR field presences, other United Nations anti-torture mechanisms, and civil society stakeholders.

## **VII. Cooperation**

### **A. United Nations anti-torture mechanisms**

36. The Fund continued its collaboration with other United Nations anti-torture mechanisms, namely the Committee against Torture, the Subcommittee on Prevention of

Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, who unanimously warned that the COVID-19 pandemic was leading to an escalation in torture and ill-treatment worldwide. In particular, underlining the importance of redress and rehabilitation, the Chair of the Board of Trustees highlighted the specific and increasing risks faced by victims of torture of exposure to infection due to their vulnerable situation, and of further traumatization. The four anti-torture mechanisms also co-organized a webinar on the impact of the global pandemic on torture, hosted by the Association for the Prevention of Torture. The event featured on-the-ground experience of practitioners assisting torture survivors in Brazil, Jordan, the Philippines and South Africa, and met an unprecedented degree of success: more than 500 participants on Zoom and some 15,000 views on the OHCHR Facebook page.

37. On 14 October 2020, the Chair of the Board participated in an informal exchange on the sidelines of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly about the current priorities and new developments in the global fight against torture. The meeting was held under the auspices of the Convention against Torture Initiative, with representatives of Chile, Denmark, Fiji, Ghana, Indonesia and Morocco, and the participation of the Chair of the Committee against Torture, the Chair of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Possible areas for collaboration between the Convention against Torture Initiative and United Nations anti-torture mandate holders in 2021 were discussed.

## **B. Group of Friends**

38. The Group of Friends of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture was launched on 19 March 2019 with the objectives of improving the visibility of the Fund as an effective grant-making mechanism generating a concrete and measurable impact at the individual and community levels; advocating for the importance of assistance for victims of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including opportunities for redress and rehabilitation; encouraging support for the Fund among States Members of the United Nations and other potential actors to be identified; and encouraging cooperation among all actors engaged in assistance for victims of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and the implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.<sup>3</sup> Since its launch, the Group has helped to convene Member States to public events organized by the Fund. The Board of Trustees of the Fund and the Group of Friends met remotely during the Board's fifty-second session. The Group of Friends is committed to continuing to engage and collaborate with the Board to improve the visibility of the Fund, particularly within the framework of the celebrations to commemorate the Fund's fortieth anniversary.

## **C. Cooperation with academic institutions**

39. Since 2019, the Fund has engaged in collaboration with the American University, the Washington College of Law, Impact Litigation and the Kovler Project against Torture. The research project provides contextual background information about existing patterns of torture (in accordance with article 1 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment) and substantive obligations for redress (in accordance with article 14 of the Convention, on restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and the right to the truth, and guarantees of non-repetition).

<sup>3</sup> Current and founding members of the Group of Friends are Argentina, Austria, Chile, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Georgia, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Norway, Peru, Switzerland and the United States of America. Denmark and Georgia are co-chairs.

The academic research helps to inform the Fund's regional needs analysis to guide project evaluations, priorities and outreach strategy.

## **VIII. Making a contribution**

40. 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](mailto:unvft@ohchr.org); telephone: +41 22 917 9376; fax: +41 22 917 9017.

## **IX. Conclusions and recommendations**

41. **The Fund continues to play an indispensable supporting role for organizations that provide victims of torture and their families with crucial specialized direct assistance.**

42. **The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected torture victims, often exposing them to intersectional vulnerabilities and discrimination, in particular economically marginalized groups, refugees, asylum seekers, persons deprived of liberty and persons with disabilities. Torture victims risk further deterioration of their fragile state of physical and mental health, and also further violence, abuse and economic destitution.**

43. **The unprecedented challenge posed by the global pandemic has reinforced the need for the Fund to respond swiftly to new and emergency situations, wherever they arise, in a creative and flexible manner. In the current circumstances, the Fund will continue to place particular emphasis on sustaining partnerships with both grass-roots initiatives and rehabilitation centres with a view to assessing needs and effectively filling assistance gaps for the most vulnerable victims.**

44. **Now more than ever, States must guarantee effective and accessible avenues for redress, including rehabilitation programmes for torture victims burdened by paralyzed judicial systems and re-traumatization in the context of the global pandemic.**

45. **In 2020, the Fund has to date received 20 contributions and pledges and also public donations amounting to \$10,243,929. A yearly income of a minimum of \$12 million is necessary to respond adequately to the requests for assistance received by the Fund from rehabilitation centres and other civil society actors worldwide. The Secretary-General appeals to Member States and other stakeholders to contribute to the Fund, noting that contributions are a concrete manifestation of the commitment of States to the elimination of torture, in accordance with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, in particular article 14 thereof.**

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