



FAQ

What is the CAT Convention?

The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT Convention) is an international human rights treaty, which aims to eradicate the practice of torture in all countries across the world. It represents the most detailed international codification of standards and practices which aim to protect individuals from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The CAT Convention was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1984 as a result of the growing recognition of the continued existence of the global problem of torture and entered into force in June 1987. By April 2014, 155 States were party to the CAT Convention.

What is the CAT Committee?

The Committee Against Torture was established under Article 17 of the CAT Convention. Its role is to monitor and supervise the implementation by States parties of their obligations under the treaty. The CAT Committee operates on a part time basis. From 2015 onwards, the CAT Committee will meet three times per year, for a period of three or four weeks. States are generally obliged to submit their State report every four years.

Who are the CAT Committee members?

The CAT Committee is composed of ten members. Each member is nominated by a State party and elected by secret ballot by the States parties. Each member serves a four-year term and may be re-elected if re-nominated. States parties should ensure that there is an equitable geographic mix of CAT Committee members. Members shall be persons "of high moral standing and recognised competence in the field of human rights". A member serves in his or her personal capacity, rather than as a representative of his or her nominating State.

You can find an up-to-date list on the official website of the UN OHCHR.

What is the State reporting procedure?

The reporting system is the only compulsory monitoring mechanism under the CAT Convention. A State party must submit an initial report within one year of the treaty coming into force for that State. Thereafter, as required by the CAT Convention, the CAT Committee requests reports every four years. At the end of its Concluding Observations, it indicates the date by which the State party examined should submit its next periodic report.

In its initial report, a State party should outline how it implements the rights and obligations set out in the CAT Convention. It should give details of relevant legislation, policies, and practices. It is not sufficient to simply outline legislation without commenting on how, or if, that legislation is enforced. It should also highlight areas where implementation is deficient or problematic.

A State report is a public document, and is available on the treaty bodies' website. This website also details the dates at which future reports are due.

What is the List of Issues (LOIs)?

The CAT Committee will analyse the State report, upon which a list of issues (LOI) will be drafted, generally by the member(s) of the CAT Committee appointed as country rapporteurs or a country report task force, which will then be adopted in plenary in the session ahead of the State party's report. Subsequently, the State party will reply to the LOI in writing and will also send a delegation to Geneva to engage in an interactive constructive dialogue with the CAT Committee at the session in which the report will be examined. The adoption of the LOI, in the session prior to the examination of the State party report, allows, on one hand, for the CAT Committee to ask for the clarification of and update on certain issues and, on the other, provides time and guidance to the State party for the preparation of its discussion with the CAT Committee, taking into account the issues of particular interest outlined by the CAT Committee in the LOI. During the review process, CAT Committee members make use of information originating from other treaty bodies and special procedures from the UN system. They also draw on other sources of information, including information from CSOs, but also from National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and regional human rights mechanisms.

What is the List of Issues Prior to Reporting (LOIPR)?

In 2007, the CAT Committee initiated a new optional procedure, which consists of the preparation and adoption of list of issues to be transmitted to State parties prior to the submission of their periodic report. This List of Issues Prior to Reporting (LOIPR) is a useful tool for preparing more focused and timely reports. The LOIPRs are prepared, adopted and transmitted to the State party concerned at least one year in advance of the due reporting date. States that choose to adopt the procedure and receive the LOIPR do not receive a further list of issues before the consideration of their reports.

What are the Concluding Observations?

Under Article 19 of the CAT Convention, the CAT Committee is mandated to examine reports on the measures taken by State Parties to implement the treaty. At the conclusion of the report examination session, the CAT Committee adopt Concluding Observations on the relevant State party. These include concerns and recommendations that reflect the CAT Committee's position on the status of the treaty's implementation in the respective country. The CAT Committee expert (appointed as the follow-up Special Rapporteur) will then engage in a dialogue with a State on how to effectively implement the recommendations, and addressing subjects of priority concern. Follow-up information is publicly available via the treaty bodies' website.

The Concluding Observations also highlight areas that should be the focus of the next report. Periodic reports do not have to cover every treaty right in the same detail as the initial report, though significant developments between reports must be explained. That is to say, in periodic reports subsequent to its initial report, the State party should focus on issues "raised by the Committee in its previous Concluding Observations, and on significant developments since the previous report".

How can CSOs participate at the different stages of the Reporting Process?

- CSO participation is important for providing the CAT Committee members with direct country-specific information from the ground. CSOs may engage by:
- Providing written information for the List of Issues (LOI) or List of Issues Prior to Reporting (LOIPR). This information must be received by the Secretariat 10 weeks before the session in which the CAT Committee will adopt the LOI and LOIPR.
- Providing written information (alternative reports) for the examination of the State party's report. This information must be received by the Secretariat 2 weeks before the examination session.
- Orally briefing the CAT Committee members prior to the country examination. Only CSOs that have submitted written information to the CAT Committee for the given State may participate in the CSOs briefing sessions. These one-hour sessions take place prior to the examination of the State party's report, in private and with interpretation. NGOs are expected to coordinate their presentation in order to avoid repeating information and to use their time to highlight and provide updates on the most important issues in the submitted written information.
- Providing information for the follow-up to the Concluding Observations.

Under the CAT Committee's Rules and Procedures, NGOs may be invited to submit written information relevant to the Committee's activities. Any NGO may also submit information on its own initiative. ECOSOC accreditation status is not required for the submission of written information or participation in the oral briefings.

How can CSOs register to attend the CAT session?

Participants must submit a completed Conference Registration Form for the attention of Ms. Adele Quist at aquist@ohchr.org, with a copy to the secretariat of the CAT at cat@ohchr.org. This should be done no later than two weeks prior to the start of the session so that arrangements can be made for the issuance of the United Nations ground passes to enter United Nations premises.

To receive the ground pass, all applicants are required to bring the signed original of the Conference Registration Form, a valid national passport or government issued photo ID, and appear in person at the security booth of Palais Wilson (52 rue des Pâquis, 1201 Geneva, Switzerland. Office hours are 9:00 to 18:00, Monday through Friday). Please note that applicants must bring their passports (or government issued photo ID) every time they wish to enter UN premises.

For more information, please refer to the CAT information page.