

Joint statement by Mykola Gnatovskyy, President of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), and Marin Mrčela, President of the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) on the occasion of the 40th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (25 February – 22 March 2019)

Strasbourg (France), 25 February 2019

The CPT, Council of Europe monitoring body in charge of the prevention of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment, as well as GRECO, Council of Europe monitoring body in charge of combating corruption, have gathered growing evidence of the links between corruption and torture or inhuman or degrading treatment.

In the light of this, we, the President of the CPT and the President of GRECO, launch an appeal to our member States to increase their efforts to fight corruption, paying special attention to its consequences on persons deprived of liberty. Member States should take decisive action to implement the recommendations of the CPT and GRECO fully and effectively in order to eradicate these threats to democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

In doing so, we concur with the opinion expressed by Nils Melzer, United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, who stated in his recent report to the Human Rights Council that wherever torture and corrupt practices coexist, their relationship tends to be mutually reinforcing.

In this respect, during several visits to places of detention in Council of Europe member States, the CPT found that the manner in which persons in police custody and prisoners are treated or detained is influenced by corrupt practices among law enforcement officials and other criminal justice actors. Moreover, corruption may have an impact on the deprivation of liberty itself. In the Committee's view, corruption brings in its wake discrimination, violence, insecurity and, ultimately, a loss of respect for authority in places of deprivation of liberty.

GRECO is also deeply aware of the serious implications of corruption on all segments of society, including persons deprived of liberty who are particularly exposed to both torture and corruption. GRECO is now evaluating the action taken in European states to prevent corruption and promote integrity in law enforcement agencies, protect whistleblowers and bring perpetrators to justice. GRECO is paying increased attention to corruption risks within the law enforcement agencies and, in this regard, is closely co-operating with the CPT.

Torture and corruption are indeed concurrent consequences of the same original cause, namely the failure of the relevant governance system to prevent abuse by unchecked power.

It is therefore crucial that steps are taken to develop policies of zero tolerance, effective monitoring and robust accountability. Measures aimed at fostering a strong culture among public officials opposing corrupt practices should also be implemented.