Mr. President,
Distinguished Committee members,

The ICC greatly values the opportunity to meet with you today, to discuss the development of a Committee position paper on national human rights institutions (NHRIs).

I regret not being able to attend this important meeting in person but warmly welcome the opportunity to address you from South Africa by video-statement.

The ICC and its members recognise and value the unique role of treaty bodies in promoting and monitoring the effective implementation of universal human rights standards at national level. As the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon eloquently highlighted in his Foreword to the High Commissioner's report on the treaty body strengthening process, “the treaty bodies are at the heart of the international human rights protection system as engines translating universal norms into social justice and individual well being.”

The ICC recognises the treaty bodies' invaluable contributions not least because of the treaty bodies' legal mandates to monitor the effective implementation of universal human rights standards at the national level.

In as much as treaty bodies are indispensable for the national human rights protection system, national human rights institutions in turn can be key partners to the treaty body system.

As independent institutions with a constitutional or legislative mandate to protect and promote human rights, national human rights institutions work to
bridge the gap between international and national human rights systems, with a view to strengthening human rights on the ground.

Independent, Paris Principles compliant national human rights institutions are a trusted source of independent and authoritative information on national situations. National human rights institutions can, and are, following up on treaty bodies’ recommendations, including by: disseminating such recommendations largely within all sectors of society, advising the state on implementation, and monitoring and reporting on progress therein.

National human rights institutions have a distinct role to play in monitoring the implementation of treaty body recommendations at national level and reporting thereon given that they are nationally established but operate on the basis of international guidelines, that is, the Paris Principles.

Critically, research shows that States with an independent and effective Paris Principles compliant NHRI are more likely to ratify international human treaties and meet reporting obligations.

Consequently, the ICC warmly welcomes the Committee on Enforced Disappearances commitment to cooperate with NHRIs.

In this regard, the ICC appreciates the reference to NHRIs in the Committee's rules of procedures, inviting NHRIs to ‘submit to reports, other information or documentation and oral and written statements, as appropriate, relevant to the Committee’s activities under the Convention’, which will form an important basis for cooperation between the Committee and NHRIs.

Further, the ICC is delighted that the Committee is developing a paper on cooperation with NHRIs, and welcomes today's opportunity to contribute to this process. The ICC would like to offer the following suggestions for the Committee's consideration.

First, the ICC would welcome if the paper would take into account the unique role of NHRIs within both the treaty body system and the domestic infrastructure. This role is grounded in the NHRIs' mandates under the Paris Principles. And it is distinct, yet complementary, to the ones of states and civil society.

Secondly, the paper should aim at ensuring NHRIs' most effective participation at all stages of the Committee's work and processes. Specific opportunities for NHRIs to contribute to, and support the Committee's work would include: reporting; review; and follow up; as well as NHRIs' support to
the procedure under article 30 and the communications procedure and to the Committee's country visits.

**Best practices of cooperation with NHRIs,** such as those already established by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racism and Racial Discrimination and by the Committee Against Torture, as well as the recent paper on cooperation with NHRIs adopted by the Human Rights Committee, may further inform the development of the Committee's position paper and working methods as they relate to NHRIs.

Thirdly, and finally, the ICC supports efforts by all treaty bodies aimed at **increasing accessibility of the system to national-level actors**, including human rights defenders, non-governmental organisations and NHRIs, including through increased information-sharing and the use of new technologies such as video conferencing.

Distinguished Committee members, the Convention on Enforced Disappearances is a landmark treaty that brings new hope to the victims of enforced disappearances and their families.

In South Africa, part of the reconciliation process at the end of the apartheid era required dealing with cases of enforced disappearances. However many families in South Africa still remain with unanswered questions about the whereabouts of their family members who were disappeared during apartheid.

Our history places South Africa in the position to take a lead in advocating for the support for the Convention and the work of the Committee. It is imperative that national human rights institutions in accordance with their mandates take appropriate steps to ensure State accountability including through promotion of the ratification and domestication of the Convention.

Being a new Convention, and a newly established Committee, the ICC looks forward to the opportunity of developing training for NHRIs, including with OHCHR, to ensure that the Convention and its relevance to national situations across the globe is well understood, as are the opportunities for NHRIs to engage with the Committee.

In conclusion, the ICC is grateful for the opportunity to present this statement and states its commitment on behalf of its members to effectively cooperate with the Committee.

I wish you fruitful deliberations. Thank you.