Distinguished Chairperson and members of the Committee,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here today on behalf of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI). Please let me convey best wishes for a successful continuation of the session from our Chairperson Prof Dr Beate Rudolf.

GANHRI is the global network of national human rights institutions (NHRIs) in all regions, working to support and strengthen NHRIs to be effective as they work to translate international human rights standards into lived realities for the people on the ground.

GANHRI values greatly the opportunity to exchange regularly with this Committee at each of your sessions. It is a unique opportunity to discuss joint priorities and to update the Committee members on the work that GANHRI and NHRIs around the globe undertake in promoting ratification, implementation of the International Convention for the protection of all persons from enforced disappearance (Conventions) and in engaging with this Committee.

Let me begin by congratulating this Committee on behalf of our members for your engagement with victims of enforced disappearances, their representative organisations and civil society. It is their perseverance and work that brought us this far in the fight against enforced disappearances and it is crucial that we all continue to work together at national, regional and international level towards this end.

Today I would like to touch upon:

- The continued cooperation among the Committee and NHRIs;
- The conference held in April 2018 in Kathmandu, Nepal, on the role of NHRIs in addressing impunity and realising human rights in South Asia; and
- The upcoming GANHRI International Conference in October 2018, in Marrakesh, Morocco.

Cooperation between the Committee and NHRIs

GANHRI welcomes the consideration that the Committee has given since its establishment to the role of NHRIs in its work. The adoption of the Paper on Cooperation between the Committee and NHRIs in 2014, and the consultative process with GANHRI and NHRIs leading up to its adoption, was critical in building the relationship between the Committee and NHRIs.

The paper provides the basis for a strengthened cooperation between the Committee and NHRIs, setting out concrete ways in which the Committee and NHRIs may collaborate at all stages of the Committee’s work. Moreover, the paper continues to serve as inspiration for other treaty bodies to reinforce their engagement with NHRIs.

At previous meetings, we have reported to the Committee about GANHRI and NHRIs’ activities in implementing the paper on cooperation and our shared priorities, including:
- experiences and lessons learned in engaging with the Committee,
- activities carried out by NHRIs in promoting the ratification of the Convention and
- activities carried out by NHRIs in encouraging the State Parties to meet their reporting obligations under article 29.1.

GANHRI continues to serve as a platform for exchanges with and among NHRIs across all regions, providing for an opportunity to debate and identify what constitutes a good practice to reinforce and strengthen NHRIs domestically in discharging their functions, including in promoting ratification and implementation of the Convention.

In particular, GANHRI continues to collect and document good examples of the work of NHRIs in implementing the cooperation paper in support of NHRIs that have been recently established or that begin to engage with your Committee, as more states ratify the Convention. In close cooperation with the Committee Secretariat, we continue to offer advice and support to NHRIs to effectively engage with the Committee.

International Conference on addressing impunity and realizing human rights in South Asia

From 9 to 11 April 2018, the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal hosted an International Conference titled “Identifying Challenges, Assessing Progress, Moving Forward: Addressing Impunity and Realizing Human Rights in South Asia”. The Conference provided a platform for various national, regional and international actors to meet, share experiences and lessons and to discuss challenges in the region and to identify common approaches and joint initiatives to protect and promote human rights. The Conference was open by the President of Nepal and participants included the NHRIs of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

A primary focus of the Conference was to discuss impunity and transitional justice, tackling the challenges experienced by human rights organisations that work against impunity and discussing the role of NHRIs. Other issues identified were:
- the challenges posed by national security and the need for security sector reform; and
- safe migration, refugees and asylum seekers.
The Conference concluded with the adoption of a landmark declaration which provides clear recommendations to states and sets an unprecedented roadmap for NHRI's in the region to work closely together in addressing these challenges.

Among other critical recommendations, the outcome Kathmandu Declaration on Addressing Impunity and Realizing Human Rights in South Asia urges States to ratify the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and other international human rights treaties, and underlined the centrality of the security sector reform, with a focus to ending extrajudicial executions, disappearances and torture.

GANHRI will be working closely with our regional network in Asia Pacific and NHRI's in the region to support in follow-up and implementation of the Declaration.

GANHRI International Conference on expanding civic space and promoting and protecting human rights defenders, with a focus on women: The role of National Human Rights Institutions.

Last but not least, I am pleased to announce that the 13th International Conference of NHRI's will focus on expanding civic space and promoting and protecting human rights defenders, with be on women and the role of NHRI's.

The International Conference, co-hosted by GANHRI, the National Human Rights Council of Morocco and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, will be marking the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the 25th anniversary of the endorsement of the Paris Principles and the establishment of the international network of NHRI's; and the 20th anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

The space in which human rights defenders operate is increasingly under significant pressure, as restrictions on human rights and fundamental freedoms and their activities have proliferated. The scale and depth of this trend is of great concern. Against this backdrop, the Conference will explore potential roles and contributions that NHRI's have in expanding civic space and promoting and protecting the work of human rights defenders, with a focus on women.

The Conference will also look at the linkages between human rights, development and peace and security, specifically Goal 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice and accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. NHRI's that fully comply with the Paris Principles have been recognized as one of the indicators to measure progress by States under Goal 16 of the SDGs.

Although the topic of our International Conference is of relevance to all treaty bodies, it is of specific importance to this Committee as increasingly enforced disappearances are perpetrated against human rights defenders, being an alarming trend in many regions.

GANHRI looks forwards to working closely with all partners, including this Committee, and will be reporting back to you at your next session on the outcomes of the Conference.

Thank you for your attention.