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United Nations Human Rights Council
19th Session (27 February - 23 March 2012)

Item 6: Consideration of UPR Reports

Oral Statement, Association for the Prevention of Torture

VENEZUELA

Madame President

The Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT) welcomes the acceptance by Venezuela of the recommendation made by Brazil to ratify, among other human rights treaties, the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT).¹ In this regard, on 1 July 2011 Venezuela showed early commitment to the prevention of torture and other ill-treatment by signing the Optional Protocol.

Madame President

Venezuelan prisons are characterized by high rates of violence, which has resulted in an alarming number of deaths in recent years.² This situation, due in part to severe overcrowding (356%, according to the Venezuelan Prison Observatory)³, as well as the chronic lack of medical care for detainees and a high procedural backlog in the handling of their criminal cases, deserves urgent attention. In addition, the APT is concerned at reports that non-governmental organizations are being denied access to places of detention and have been threatened and publicly stigmatized for exercising their legitimate right to defend the human rights of persons deprived of their liberty.

The APT calls on Venezuela to turn the commitment made before this Council into concrete action, through the prompt ratification of the Optional Protocol and the creation of an effective national preventive mechanism, following an open, transparent and participatory process, involving consultations with civil society organizations.

By joining the 14 States in Latin America that are already States Parties to the Optional Protocol, Venezuela would take an essential step towards improving the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty.

Thank you, Madame President.

¹ Human Rights Council, Universal Periodic Review, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Venezuela, ¶ 93.4, UN Doc A/HRC/19/12, 7 December 2011, available at: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/172/43/PDF/G1117243.pdf?OpenElement>.

² According to information provided to the Inter-American Commission (IACHR) at its 141st session in March 2011, 476 inmates reportedly died in 2010 and another 967 were injured. From 1999 to 2010, a total of 4,506 inmates reportedly died and 12,518 were injured. See IACHR Press release N°57/11, «IACHR deplores violent deaths in Venezuelan Prison», 16 June 2011, available at <http://www.cidh.oas.org/Comunicados/English/2011/57-11eng.htm>.

³ See summary prepared by the OHCHR in accordance with paragraph 1g(c) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1, Venezuela, ¶ 25, UN Doc A/HRC/WG.6/12/VEN/3, 22 July 2011, available at: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/152/39/PDF/G1115239.pdf?OpenElement>.