



# **THE STATE OF THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODY SYSTEM**

**2007**

**an NGO perspective**

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## Executive Summary

The UN Human Rights Treaty Body system has experienced both positive and negative developments over the last 12 months. Of continuing concern from an NGO perspective is the general lack of visibility and general awareness of the treaty system's recommendations and decisions, and the lack of implementation by states. While most treaty bodies are facilitating more transparency and deeper NGO involvement in their proceedings, the trend toward emphasis on a list of issues and state response instead of the original state report means that the relevance of NGO input is slipping. Several recommendations are offered at the end of this report (pages 6-7) to help address these concerns.

The growth trends in number of ratifying states, numbers of reports and individual complaints, and the development of a new universal periodic mechanism under the Human Rights Council, makes it imperative for the treaty body system to manage and plan for workloads and growth trends, in order to effectively respond to greater awareness and use of its mechanisms.

Please note that a glossary of terms used in this document is included in the final appendix.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This is a summary report highlighting changes in the UN human rights treaty body system during the last 12 months (since mid-2006), with emphasis on issues of importance to NGOs, NHRIs and other human rights advocates and defenders. The statistics used in this report should be considered indicative only, helpful in identifying trends and resource needs but not statistically authoritative. The information has been gathered from public data sources including the online treaty body database, but these sources sometimes are not current or are corrected or modified after the data is first issued.

## 2. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Since mid-2006 there are two new treaty instruments opened for signature (Disabilities and Disappearances Conventions), one new treaty body (SPT), and 63 new country ratifications of the core human rights treaties. Several states that were chronically late on their submission of reports have filed and will presented their reports during 2007. More treaty bodies have stabilized or improved their state

report backlogs. Greater inter-committee cooperation is occurring. More information is consistently being made available to NGOs and human rights advocates on each of the treaty body websites. Useful efforts to harmonize and rationalize procedures and reporting requirements between treaty bodies are continuing. The details of the universal periodic review function of the Human Rights Council are coming into focus and should soon be a useful interrelationship to the treaty body system.

### 3. CONCERNS

However, among the concerns of 2007 are the continuing backlog of individual complaints, the lack of general publicity and awareness of the results and recommendations of the treaty body system, and the continuing challenges to promote meaningful implementation of recommendations in the field.

There is also a worrisome trend associated with the responses to the list of issues in the state reporting cycle. While both the development of the list of issues structure and the submission of an increasing number of replies by states are both welcome trends, the unfortunate consequence is to shift the most relevant exchange of substantive views away from the domain where NGO input is now most emphasized. Thus the trend over the last 10 years in all of the treaty bodies, of opening up its process more and more to NGO input, is in danger of being undermined by the shifting of the relevant sequence of steps in the reporting cycle. As discussed below, there is no easy answer to this problem. We recommend in the last section of this report that the phenomenon be studied and effective solutions sought.

### 4. TREATY BODY EXPERTS

There are now 125 experts serving in the eight operating treaty bodies, coming from 71 different countries. Of these, 38 countries have a single expert in the system; 33 countries have 2 or more experts in the system. Of these experts, 49 are women and 76 are men (39.2%). However, if you remove CEDAW from these figures (where 22 of 23 are women), the percentage of women goes down to 26.5% (27 women, 75 men).

Treaty body	Number of experts
Human Rights Committee (ICCPR)	18
CESC	18
CEDAW	23
CAT	10
OPCAT	10
CERD	18
CRC	18
CMW	10
TOTAL	125

To my knowledge there is one member of an indigenous community currently serving as a treaty body expert. There is no member of a disabled group or community serving as an expert to my knowledge.

### 5. INCREASE IN RATIFICATIONS & ACCESSIONS

All human rights instruments have experienced an increase in ratifications since last year, with the most significant gains occurring in the OPCAT and the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Mid-2006</b>	<b>Mid-2007</b>
ICCPR	155	160
CESC	152	156
CEDAW	180	185
CAT	141	144
OPCAT	20	34
CERD	170	173
CRC	192	193
CRC Opt Prot Sale of Children	103	119
CRC Opt Prot Armed Conflict	104	114
CMW	34	36
Disappearances (CED)	0	0
Disabilities (CPD)	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	1251	1314
<b>Percentage increase</b>		5%

## 6. OVERDUE REPORTS BY TREATY INSTRUMENT

Statistics on the number of overdue reports are periodically updated in the online treaty body database of the Office of High Commissioner website. According to this database of the end of May 2007, the following reports were overdue by treaty:

ICCPR	90
CESC	213
CEDAW	247
CAT	170
CERD	483
CRC	103
CRC Opt Prot Sale of Children	72
CRC Opt Prot Armed Conflict	65
CMW	29
<b>TOTAL</b>	1472

### Ratio of overdue reports to number of treaty ratifications

Is the number of overdue reports getting better or worse? In absolute terms, the number is increasing over time, but part of this is no doubt due to the growing size of the system. At least one way to evaluate the status of overdue reports is to compare these numbers to the base number of countries who are ratifying the treaties. Logically the number of overdue reports will go up simply when the number of countries who are required to submit reports is increasing. Thus comparing the total number of overdue reports to the total number of ratifying countries provides a rough indication of whether the phenomenon is getting better or worse. At least as measured during the last 2 years, this approach yields a fairly uniform ratio between overdue reports and number of ratifying states.

	<b>Mid-2005</b>	<b>Mid-2006</b>	<b>Mid-2007</b>
Overdue reports	1381	1420	1472
Number of ratifications	1213	1231	1279*
Ratio	1.14	1.15	1.15

\*The one ratification in 2007 of the Disabilities Convention is excluded since the Convention has not yet come into force. The ratifications of OPCAT in all 3 years are excluded since no reports are required under that optional protocol.

## 7. STATES BEING CONSIDERED IN ONE OR MORE TREATY BODY SESSIONS IN 2007

It is also suggested that one of the indicators of the burden or efficiency of the system as it grows is to consider how many states are appearing each year and how many states are experiencing multiple appearances. As the system grows these multiple appearances might themselves become a scheduling issue.

For 2007, these numbers appear as follows:

Number of reports	135*
Number of states	90
States with 2 treaty body appearances in 2007	26
States with 3 treaty body appearances in 2007	6
States with 4 treaty body appearances in 2007	0
States with 5 treaty body appearances in 2007	1**

\*this figure includes 6 circumstances where no report has been submitted and the treaty body has scheduled consideration of the state's human rights situation in the absence of a report

\*\*3 of the 5 treaty body appearances for this state (Costa Rica) are in the CRC where its periodic report and two optional reports are being considered together in one session

See Appendix a to this paper for a detailed list of states who are scheduled for one or more treaty body appearances during 2007.

## 8. AVERAGE LENGTH OF REPORTS SUBMITTED TO THE TREATY BODIES, 2005 VS. 2007

In 2005 I reviewed each of the reports that were considered by the treaty bodies in their 2005 sessions, including the average number of pages in the state reports filed under each treaty. I have done the same review in 2007 and can offer the following comparative analysis, which indicates the average number of pages per report has gone down 28% in these two years.

	2005	2007	% change
ICCPR	96.6	89	-7.8%
CESC	132	136	+0.3%
CEDAW	76.2	84	+10.2%
CAT	91.9	56	-39.1%
CERD	45.9	49	+6.8%
CRC	136.9	87.6	-37.2%
CMW	no data	86	n/a
<b>AVERAGE of all reports</b>	93.9 pages	67.7 pages	-28%

\*For these purposes I have excluded the reports under the optional protocols to the CRC since those tend to be briefer and will eventually be included in the main reports submitted to the Committee. However, in 2007, these CRC optional protocol reports represented 600 of 1800 total report pages reviewed by the Committee (33%) and averaged 34 pages (OPSA) and 10.3 pages (OPAC) respectively.

\*\*In theory initial reports will be longer than periodic reports but in the 2007 reports the difference between the two types did not appear to be statistically significant. In my 2005 research I did not record whether there was a significant difference between the page length of these two types.

Note that the one report submitted to date which expressly follows the new harmonized reporting guidelines (the UNMIK report filed in 2006 under the CCPR) has a total of 128 pages, consisting of 49 pages for the core document and 79 pages for the periodic report. This 79 page periodic report segment would exceed the average report length of 67.7 pages indicated above for 2007, but it is less than the 89 page average for periodic reports submitted in 2007 under the CCPR to the Human Rights

Committee. However, since the core report would have to be updated from time to time, perhaps at the time of each new periodic report that is submitted, the total average report length filed may be something like 90-100 pages using this structure (in other words, 10-20 pages of additional core document pages filed for each periodic report).

### Availability and average length of supplemental state party responses

As of 2007 most treaty bodies are now posting online some or all of the responses they receive from state parties to the Committee's list of issues. This has made it possible to begin to measure the impact of these responses on the system. For purposes of the following table I looked at the results of each of the last two sessions of each treaty body as posted online (except CMW where I used all 3 sessions they have held since inception). I recorded the number of state party replies posted and the number of pages of each response and compared it to the original report lengths.

Committee	Session	Responses posted*	Page length of responses	Page length of orig repts
CCPR	Mar 2007	2 of 3	24 + 31 = 27.5 page average	89
	Oct 2006	2 of 4	38 + 58 = 45.5 page average	89
CESC	May 2007	<b>3 of 3</b>	74+69+46= 63 page average	136
	Nov 2006	<b>5 of 5</b>	59.2 page average	136
CERD	Feb 2007	4 of 7	19.5 page average	49
	Aug 2006	1 of 8	41 pages	49
CEDAW	May 2007	<b>8 of 8</b>	29.1 page average	84
	Jan 2007	<b>15 of 15</b>	30.6 page average	84
CAT	May 2007	5 of 7**	61.8 page average	56
	Nov 2006	3 of 7	58+59+131=82.7	56
CRC	May 2007	<b>12 of 12</b>	Main rept--71.8 page ave OPAC – 6.5 page ave OPSA – 23.5 page ave	88
	Jan 2007	10 of 12	Main rept– 58.3 page ave OPAC – 4.5 page ave OPSA – 7.5 page ave	88
CMW	Apr 2007	<b>1 of 1</b>	26 pages	86
	Oct 2006	<b>1 of 1</b>	64 pages	86
	Apr 2006	<b>1 of 1</b>	16 pages	86
TOTALS		71 of 94 (75.5%)	40 page average	67.7 page average

\*The figures in bold font indicate a session where all state party responses were eventually posted online in one or more languages.

\*\*In the May 2007 CAT session, one response is not posted. Another response is indicated as being available, but the link to the response does not work. Thus only 5 of 7 state party responses are actually available.

### 9. SUGGESTIONS FOR MAKING THE TREATY BODY SYSTEM MORE EFFECTIVE

The following are some suggestions for how the treaty body system could be improved, including to facilitate more effective participation by NGOs and National Human Rights Institutions, and to more effectively implement of results and recommendations

1. **Written responses to lists of issues.** Continue the trend of posting copies of state written replies to lists of issues as promptly as possible so that NGOs and other interested parties can access them before the relevant treaty body appearance. Harmonize the different Committee practices currently in effect.
2. **NGO & NHRI input.** Explore methods for ensuring effective NGO and NHRI input to the written replies of states to the Committee's list of issues. Perhaps establish an open ended work group to study this issue and report to the next Inter-Committee Meeting with recommendations.

3. **Trends in state reports.** Monitor and assess the impact of changes in state reporting guidelines, including on the quality of such reports, responsiveness to prior concluding observations, responsiveness to relevant new general comments, page length, and by soliciting feedback from states, NGOs and National Human Rights Institutions
4. **Individual communications.** Methods for making information about the individual communication procedures more visible should be pursued, in addition to prompt information about the results of the decisions when made. A dialogue should be established between the treaty bodies who are reviewing individual communications and NGOs, NHRIs, and national and regional human rights courts and mechanisms, to evaluate whether the jurisprudence emerging from these decisions are clear and useable as precedents in the national court and complaint systems.
5. **Scheduling regularity and transparency.** Continue to improve regularity and transparency of scheduling information so that NGOs and NHRIs have prompt notice of coming state appearances, and have sufficient time to prepare and provide input to state report proceedings
6. **Disability access.** Take steps to ensure that all treaty body sessions and materials are accessible to disabled persons.
7. **Inter-treaty body management structure.** Create an inter-committee management structure that can address workload, backlogs, and other system management needs for the treaty body system. Perhaps establish an open ended work group to study this management function and how it could be structured.
8. **Publicity.** Develop a strategy for more effective publicizing of treaty body results, including predictable access to NGOs, media and other interested parties. The strategy should include timing issues, summarizing content to facilitate wider distribution and recognition, and uses of new technology to better distribute information about the treaty body system.
9. **Treaty body reform transparency.** Establish a more transparent forum for treaty body discussions so that NGOs can meaningfully participate, including better notice and opportunity to NGOs from the South to take advantage of any fellowship grants made available for their travel and participation at such meetings.
10. **Publish reports on prior treaty body reform events.** Encourage the OHCHR to publish the summary results of the Fall 2005 online treaty body reform discussion and the Summer 2006 Malbun II treaty body reform meeting.
11. **Annual statistical summary of the system.** Establish a practice of compiling an annual “State of the Treaty Body System” report that summarizes data that can meaningfully track the successes and problems of the system, and help to manage its future workload.
12. **Treaty body composition.** To the extent not already being done, each treaty body should regularly assess its composition, including through NGO and NHRI input, identifying any important skill sets, gender, regional, or other backgrounds that are missing or under represented in its current composition, and recommend to the state parties who will be selecting the next members of the Committee to consider these matters when choosing the next experts.

**APPENDIX A LIST OF STATES APPEARING IN ONE OR MORE TREATY BODY SESSIONS DURING 2007**

Algeria	HRC	10/2007	
Antigua & Barbuda	CERD	02/2007	
Australia	CAT	11/2007	
Austria	CEDAW	01/2007	
Austria	HRC	03/2007	
Azerbaijan	CEDAW	01/2007	
Bangladesh	CRC	05/2007	
Barbados	HRC	03/2007	
Belgium	CESC	11/2007	
Belize	CEDAW	07/2007	
Benin	CAT	11/2007	
Botswana	HRC	10/2007	
Brazil	CEDAW	07/2007	
Bulgaria	CRC	09/2007	OPAC
Bulgaria	CRC	09/2007	OPSA
Canada	CERD	02/2007	
Chile	CRC	01/2007	
Chile	HRC	03/2007	
Colombia	CEDAW	01/2007	
Cook Islands	CEDAW	07/2007	
Costa Rica	CRC	01/2007	
Costa Rica	CRC	01/2007	OPAC
Costa Rica	CRC	01/2007	OPSA
Costa Rica	HRC	03/2007	
Costa Rica	CERD	08/2007	
Costa Rica	CESC	11/2007	
Croatia	CRC	09/2007	
Czech Republic	CERD	02/2007	
Czech Republic	HRC	07/2007	
Dem Rep Congo	CERD	08/2007	
Denmark	CAT	05/2007	Greenland
Ecuador	CMW	11/2007	
Egypt	CMW	04/2007	
Estonia	CEDAW	07/2007	
Estonia	CAT	11/2007	
Finland	CESC	05/2007	
France	CRC	09/2007	OPAC
France	CRC	09/2007	OPSA
France	CESC	11/2007	
Georgia	HRC	10/2007	
Greece	CEDAW	01/2007	
Grenada	HRC	07/2007	
Guatemala	CRC	05/2007	
Guatemala	CRC	05/2007	OPAC
Guatemala	CRC	05/2007	OPSA
Guinea	CEDAW	07/2007	
Honduras	CRC	01/2007	
Honduras	CEDAW	07/2007	
Hungary	CESC	05/2007	
Hungary	CEDAW	07/2007	
India	CEDAW	01/2007	
India	CERD	02/2007	
Indonesia	CEDAW	07/2007	
Indonesia	CERD	08/2007	
Israel	CERD	02/2007	
Italy	CAT	05/2007	
Japan	CAT	05/2007	
Jordan	CEDAW	07/2007	
Kazakhstan	CEDAW	01/2007	
Kazakhstan	CRC	05/2007	
Kenya	CRC	01/2007	
Kenya	CEDAW	07/2007	
Kyrgyzstan	CRC	01/2007	OPAC
Kyrgyzstan	CRC	01/2007	OPSA
Kyrgyzstan	CERD	08/2007	
Latvia	CESC	05/2007	
Latvia	CAT	11/2007	
Libya	HRC	10/2007	



Liechtenstein	CERD	02/2007	
Liechtenstein	CEDAW	07/2007	
Lithuania	CRC	09/2007	OPAC
Luxembourg	CAT	05/2007	
Luxembourg	CRC	09/2007	OPAC
Madagascar	HRC	03/2007	
Malawi	CERD	08/2007	
Malaysia	CRC	01/2007	
Maldives	CEDAW	01/2007	
Maldives	CRC	05/2007	
Mali	CRC	01/2007	
Marshall Islands	CRC	01/2007	
Mauritania	CEDAW	05/2007	
Monaco	CRC	05/2007	OPAC
Mozambique	CEDAW	05/2007	
Mozambique	CERD	08/2007	
Namibia	CEDAW	01/2007	
Namibia	CERD	08/2007	
Nepal	CESC	05/2007	
Netherlands	CEDAW	01/2007	
Netherlands	CAT	05/2007	
Netherlands Antilles	CESC	05/2007	
New Zealand	CEDAW	07/2007	
New Zealand	CERD	08/2007	
Nicaragua	CEDAW	01/2007	
Nicaragua	CERD	08/2007	
Niger	CEDAW	05/2007	
Norway	CRC	05/2007	OPAC
Norway	CEDAW	07/2007	
Norway	CAT	11/2007	
Pakistan	CEDAW	05/2007	
Pakistan	CERD	08/2007	
Paraguay	CESC	11/2007	
Peru	CEDAW	01/2007	
Poland	CEDAW	01/2007	
Poland	CAT	05/2007	
Portugal	CAT	11/2007	
Qatar	CRC	09/2007	OPAC
Rep of Korea	CEDAW	07/2007	
Rep of Korea	CERD	08/2007	
Rep of Moldova	CERD	08/2007	
Serbia & Montenegro	CEDAW	05/2007	
Sierra Leone	CEDAW	05/2007	
Sierra Leone	CRC	09/2007	
Singapore	CEDAW	07/2007	
Slovakia	CRC	05/2007	
Spain	CRC	09/2007	OPAC
Spain	CRC	09/2007	OPSA
Sudan	CRC	05/2007	OPSA
Sudan	HRC	07/2007	
Suriname	CRC	01/2007	
Suriname	CEDAW	01/2007	
Sweden	CRC	05/2007	OPAC
Syria	CEDAW	05/2007	
Syria	CRC	09/2007	OPAC
Tajikistan	CEDAW	01/2007	
TFRY Macedonia	CERD	02/2007	
TFYR Macedonia	HRC	10/2007	
Togo	CERD	08/2007	
Ukraine	CRC	05/2007	OPSA
Ukraine	CAT	05/2007	
Ukraine	CESC	11/2007	
Uruguay	CRC	05/2007	
Uzbekistan	CAT	11/2007	
Vanuatu	CEDAW	05/2007	
Venezuela	CRC	09/2007	
Viet Nam	CEDAW	01/2007	
Zambia	HRC	07/2007	

**APPENDIX B MEMBERS OF THE 2007-2008 HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL THAT HAVE ONE OR MORE TREATY BODY APPEARANCES IN 2007**

The following table lists the members of the Human Rights Council including members recently elected in 2007, indicating which ones have treaty body appearances in 2007.

	<b>Country</b>	<b>Term expires June of</b>
	Angola	2010
√	Azerbaijan	2009
√	Bangladesh	2009
	Bolivia	2010
	Bosnia & Herzegovina	2010
√	Brazil	2008
	Cameroon	2009
√	Canada	2009
	China	2009
	Cuba	2009
	Djibouti	2009
√	Egypt	2010
√	France	2008
	Gabon	2008
	Germany	2009
	Ghana	2008
√	Guatemala	2008
√	India	2010
√	Indonesia	2010
√	Italy	2010
√	Japan	2008
√	Jordan	2009
√	Madagascar	2010
√	Malaysia	2009
√	Mali	2008
	Mauritius	2009
	Mexico	2009
√	Netherlands	2010
√	Nicaragua	2010
	Nigeria	2009
√	Pakistan	2008
√	Peru	2008
	Philippines	2010
√	Qatar	2010
√	Republic of Korea	2008
	Romania	2008
	Russian Federation	2009
	Saudi Arabia	2009
	Senegal	2009
	Slovenia	2010
	South Africa	2010
	Sri Lanka	2008
√	Ukraine	2009
	United Kingdom	2008
√	Uruguay	2009
√	Zambia	2008

Total = 24 of 47 members

## APPENDIX C UNIVERSAL RATIFICATION SCENARIOS

### Impact of universal ratification on volume of state party reporting under the international human rights treaties

last revised: 26 May 2007

	No. of State parties		Reporting cycle	Annual number of reports under different reporting scenarios				
	2007	2017		2007	2017-40%	2017-60%	2017-70%	2017-100%
HRC	160	195	5 yrs	14	16	23	27	39
CAT	144	195	4 yrs	14	20	30	34	49
CEDAW	185	195	4 yrs	38	20	30	34	49
CERD	173	195	4 yrs	20	20	30	34	49
CESC	156	195	5 yrs	10	16	23	27	39
CMW	36	195	5 yrs	2	16	23	27	39
CRC	193	195	5 yrs	15	16	23	27	39
CRC AC	114	195	5 yrs	14	0	0	0	0
CRC SC	119	195	5 yrs	10	0	0	0	0
Disappearances	0	195	5 yrs	0	16	23	27	39
Disabilities	1	195	5 yrs	0	16	23	27	39
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1281</b>	<b>2145</b>		<b>137</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>381</b>
% change fr 2007		67%			14%	66%	93%	178%

#### Notes:

1. By 2017 the separate reports for the CRC optional protocols should instead be combined into the main report
2. The different scenarios in 2017 use reporting at today's levels (40%), & increases to 50%, 60% 70% and ideal (100%)

### Impact of universal ratification in 10 years on volume of state party reporting under the international human rights treaties [assuming a uniform 5 year reporting cycle under all human rights instruments, instead of the 4 year cycle currently under CEDAW & CERD]

last revised: 26 May 2007

	No. of State parties		Reporting cycle	Annual number of reports under different reporting scenarios				
	2007	2017		in 2007	2017-40%	2017-60%	2017-70%	2017-100%
HRC	160	195	5 yrs	14	16	23	27	39
CAT	144	195	5 yrs	14	16	23	27	39
CEDAW	185	195	5 yrs	38	16	23	27	39
CERD	173	195	5 yrs	20	16	23	27	39
CESC	156	195	5 yrs	10	16	23	27	39
CMW	36	195	5 yrs	2	16	23	27	39
CRC	193	195	5 yrs	15	16	23	27	39
CRC AC	114	195	5 yrs	14	0	0	0	0
CRC SC	119	195	5 yrs	10	0	0	0	0
Disappearances	0	195	5 yrs	0	16	23	27	39
Disabilities	1	195	5 yrs	0	16	23	27	39
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1281</b>	<b>2145</b>		<b>137</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>351</b>
% change fr 2007		67%			5%	51%	77%	156%
compared to 4 year cycle					14%	66%	93%	178%

#### Notes:

1. By 2017 the separate reports for the CRC optional protocols should instead be combined into the main report
2. The different scenarios in 2017 use reporting at today's levels (40%), & increases to 50%, 60% 70% and ideal (100%)
3. The changing of the reporting cycle from 4 years to 5 years for CERD, CAT & CEDAW has a major impact on increasing volume scenario as the treaty body system approaches universal ratification -- reductions of

## APPENDIX D INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATIONS

This table summarizes the number of states who have now ratified each of the individual complaint mechanisms available in the human rights treaty system, and the population base represented by those countries so ratifying the mechanism.

Population statistics were collected from the Geohive population database at [www.geohive.com](http://www.geohive.com)

<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Ratifications</b>	<b>Population base represented</b>
CCPR	109	1.79 billion people (27% of world's population)
CEDAW	87	1.98 billion people (30% of the world's population)
CERD	47	1.19 billion people (18% of the world's population)
CAT	61	1.4 billion people (21.5% of the world's population)

## APPENDIX E GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND TERMS

The following is a list of the acronyms and other special terms used in this paper, with a brief description or definition of each term.

CAT	Convention against Torture and the Committee established under that treaty.
CCPR	Covenant on Civil & Political Rights (same as ICCPR). The Human Rights Committee is the expert body established to monitor compliance of the CCPR.
CED	Convention on Enforced Disappearances opened for signature December 2006. Not yet in force.
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the Committee established under that treaty.
CERD	Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and the Committee established under that treaty.
CESC	Covenant on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights and the Committee established by the UN to monitor compliance under this Covenant.
CMW	Convention on Migrant Workers and the Committee established under that treaty.
Concluding observations	This is the term used to describe the public statements each treaty body issues after considering a state report. Usually there are comments about progress and recommendations for improving compliance by the state.
CPD	Convention to protect Persons with Disabilities opened for signature in December 2006. Not yet in force.
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Committee established under that treaty.
General comments	This is the term used (sometimes also, general recommendations) to describe the interpretive comments a treaty body will issue from time to time, clarifying the meaning of certain articles of the treaty, or providing other guidance to states on how best to implement the treaty's obligations.
HRC	Human Rights Committee
Human Rights Council	The new body replacing as of 2006 the prior Commission on Human Rights. The Council consists of 47 members elected by the General Assembly. The Council like the Commission is a political body, with elections held every year to replace one third of its membership. Among the new mechanisms that the Council will establish is the UPR.
ICCPR	See CCPR
Inter-Committee Meeting	The annual meeting of treaty body representatives, held in June each year, to discuss common and best practices, and propose various reforms and initiatives.
List of issues	This is the term used to describe the list of questions and other comments which a treaty body submits to a Government before that Government's report is to be considered by the treaty body in a public hearing. The Government is then asked to respond to those questions before the treaty body session, and to be prepared to discuss these issues and others at the coming session.
Malbun II treaty body reform meeting	The informal name given to the informal brainstorming session held in July 2006 at the invitation of the Government of Liechtenstein, to discuss various treaty body reform proposals.
NGO	Non governmental organization.
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution (e.g., such as a Human Rights Commission or Ombudsman at the national level)
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPAC	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child concerning children in armed conflict (i.e., child soldiers)
OPCAT	Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, which established the expert body known as SPT
OPSA	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child concerning the sale of children, prostitution, and trafficking
SPT	Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (the expert body created by the OPCAT)
TFYR Macedonia	The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Universal periodic review (UPR)	The new country review mechanism under the procedures of the Human Rights Council. Every country in the world will be reviewed under the mechanism every four years.
UNMIK	UN Mission in Kosovo. They filed a report to the Human Rights Committee in 2006 on human rights compliance to the ICCPR.