

Mr. Chairman,

UNCLAS 1 NONCLAS
YT 2396
PAGE 3 OE/DE 42

Forty years ago the Universal Declaration of Human Rights set the benchmark against which the humanity of our civilization must be measured. We have before us under this agenda item a collection of material reminding us how very far the international community has yet to go to ensure effective protection of even the most basic rights and freedoms enshrined in that historic document. The Special Rapporteur on torture has concluded that "torture is still rampant in various parts of the world". From the voluminous documentation he provides, this seems an understatement at best. The statistics and analysis provided by the Working Group on Disappearances provide further testimony that unchecked governmental authority and unrestrained competition for political power, where they persist, constitute no less a threat to the individual today than they did when the concept of human rights was first advanced.

This reality underlines the need, first, to sustain and reinforce the Commission's monitoring mechanisms in the field of detentions, and, second, to build on their recommendations for domestic and international reform. In this connection, my delegation wishes to focus attention on two particular themes in considering the reports and issues before us.

The first concerns the obligation of all governments to cooperate with the representatives of the Commission, an obligation which is inherent in the Charter of the United Nations. Yet, the reports of both the Special Rapporteur and the Working Group are replete with indications of failures by governments to respond to inquiries based on substantive allegations of mistreatment or disappearances of persons under their jurisdiction. On its face, the report on torture raises questions