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Panel 3: Transparency & Access of Independent Experts to Places of Detention: Introductory Remarks and Presentation of Panelists

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PANEL 3: TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESS OF INDEPENDENT EXPERTS TO ALL PLACES OF DETENTION

Introductory Remarks and Presentation of Panelists

*Viviana Krsticevic**

WE ARE GOING TO START THE AFTERNOON SESSION WITH ANOTHER VERY DISTINGUISHED GROUP OF PANELISTS. AS you have their bios, I'm not going to delve into their whole curriculum vitae, but I'm going to highlight some of the positions that they have held and expertise that they bring to this table. We are going to be talking as Mark Thomson very well said it this morning about how opening places of detention can help prevent abuses. This is a very important aspect of the work of preventing torture and ill treatment.

In my own experience working with victims of torture, visiting prisons, psychiatric institutions, and different types of prisons that go by euphemistic names such as "houses for the wellbeing of children," visits can actually improve conditions in these places by exposing them to outside scrutiny. You can help mobilize state responses by raising the awareness of people on the outside, by opening these spaces up.

In this sense, the international community has taken a significant step in creating the Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture. The OPCAT is recognized as a major stepping-stone to prevent and help end torture. The persons sitting at this table are a fascinating group that can reflect on the mechanisms and other strategies that can help opening of places of detention.

We have Judge Ted Rubin who has extensive knowledge of juvenile justice and juvenile justice systems. He is currently a consultant, but he has been a judge, a legislator, and he has been associated with many institutions. We have Dr. Santiago Canton who has incredibly vast experience in Latin America. He is currently the Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. He has also held positions in foundations and inter-governmental organizations that have given him a true expertise not only on legal issues but on the human rights and political situation in the Americas. Sitting with us we also have Dean Malcolm Evans, and he is currently Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Law at Bristol University. He studied in Oxford. He has also written and worked on issues of public international law; of freedom of religion; and prevention of torture. Sitting with us is also Nora Sveaass who is a Vice Chair of the UN Committee Against Torture. She brings a very special talent to this group of jurists



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and activists and officials working on torture. She is a clinician. She has worked extensively with victims. She has also written profusely on torture and trauma. And last but not least we have the pleasure of having Felice Gaer, also a member of the UN Committee Against Torture. She has an extensive experience in human rights. She is currently the director of the Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights of the American Jewish Committee. She has been associated with many prestigious human rights associations and foundations so without further words, I'm going to leave you with Judge Rubin. **HRB**

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