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# History of the OPCAT

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## OPCAT timeline:

- 1978 – UNCAT negotiations: visiting mechanism idea first raised
- 1980 – Costa Rica submits draft OPCAT to UN
- 1987 – European Convention for the Prevention of Torture enters into force (CPT established)
- 1987 – UNCAT enters into force
- 1992 – UN Working Group to draft OPCAT established
- 2001 – Mexico submits draft which includes NPMs
- 2002 – Chair’s final text adopted by UNGA
- 2006 – OPCAT enters into force with 20 ratifications

OPCAT is an innovative treaty:

- Has a preventive, rather than reactive approach
- Combines international and national efforts to prevent torture and other ill-treatment
- Emphasis upon on-going constructive dialogue

How will the OPCAT prevent torture and other ill-treatment?

- Visits to places of detention is known to help prevent torture and other ill-treatment
- OPCAT bodies have broad preventive mandates: can look at “system wide” issues e.g. policy, legislative, training and educational reforms.



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What is the SPT and how does it work?

- Currently 10 members (will increase to 25 soon)
- Visits places of detention without need for further consent
- Has an advisory role with NPMs
- Works on the principle of confidentiality to aid constructive dialogue with authorities



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What are NPMs and how do they work?

- Important “national face” of the OPCAT
- Conduct visits to all places of detention
- Make recommendations aimed at preventing torture and other ill-treatment
- One size does not fit all - should be tailored to requirements of the country
- OPCAT sets out certain minimum guarantees for NPMs to function effectively