**Speech OPCAT: Christine Beerli, ICRC Vice-President**

Jean-Jacques Gautier, the Geneva banker and philanthropist who founded the Association for the Prevention of Torture in 1977, drew inspiration from the International Committee of the Red Cross, when he started mobilizing support for his idea of a system to prevent torture and other forms of ill-treatment. The OPCAT, which we are celebrating today, and the ICRC partake in a common history, a shared idea and commitment to put an end to torture and ill-treatment.

Despite this remarkable achievement, torture and other forms of ill-treatment remain widespread. We are witnessing an increase in the use of coercive interrogation techniques, prolonged solitary confinement and restrictive regimes, often associated with the prevention or eradication of violent extremism. Worryingly, general attitudes towards torture have now become more tolerant: torture is seen as acceptable in our pursuit of security, a fact of war. This was not the case twenty years ago: we need to change this.

The ICRC has been visiting detainees since World War I.Our detention visits are the cornerstone of our work against torture. We engage with all authorities and actors of influence – from State to Non-State Armed Groups – with the aim of stopping abuse and ensuring humane treatment, privileging a bilateral and confidential approach. We are currently visiting more than 930’000 detainees in 1601 places of detention in 96 countries. We follow 17’928 detainees on an individual basis.

We have increased our investment in torture prevention**,** shifting our focus from pointing out the problems to the authorities to working jointly in identifying the causes andfinding solutions. Through specialized training, capacity building and exchange of experience on best practices with our Advisors in Prison Systems, Police and Gendarmerie, Armed Forces, public health systems and legal matters.

An area which we are developing is the post-release support to victims of torture, mainly through our partnership with the Swedish, Swiss and Belgian Red Cross National Societies. Mitigating the negative effects of torture is now firmly entrenched within the Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

Continuous efforts from all of us are and will be necessary at international, regional and national levels to fight and prevent torture. The ICRC is fully committed to this – and at all levels. We need to capitalize on each of our unique and specific expertise and mandates, bringing our efforts together to be more effective and impacting change at systemic level and in practice. We need to share our best practices and methodologies: this is already happening here and on the field, and we shall continue to do so.

And because torture has to be fought first and foremost on the ground where it is happening, there is astrongneed for national credible and independent bodies with the capacity to strengthen the system and to limit abuse. We at the ICRC are willing to contribute to the success of the mission of the National Preventive Mechanisms, wherever possible. Today, more than ever, we need to stand united in our fight against torture and ill-treatment.