(Geneva, 21 October 2019)

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson and fellow panel members, please accept the warmest greetings on behalf of the President of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and myself.

Allow me to mention a few concrete examples of our recent efforts to strengthen our cooperation with other regional and international courts as well as United Nations bodies.

The last couple of years have been very significant to the Inter-American Human Rights System. The American Convention reached its 50th Anniversary in 2019, and the Inter-American Court celebrated the 40th anniversary of its establishment in 2018.

As part of the year-long celebrations and events in the Americas, I will highlight the main activities carried out with the UN and regional mechanisms.

Following a bilateral meeting between the President of the Court and the UN Secretary-General in December 2017, in which they discussed the present and future challenges facing both the inter-American system and the universal human rights system and the joint intention to expand opportunities for dialogue and cooperation, last July, the UN Secretary-General visited the seat of the Inter-American Court and met with its members. The meeting was also attended by the President of Costa Rica, and the Presidents and several members of the European Court of Human Rights and the African Court of Human and Peoples’ Rights.

Mr. Guterres took part in the inaugural ceremony of the 40th Anniversary of the entry into force of the American Convention on Human Rights and the creation of the Court.

With the Treaty-Bodies, the Court has strengthened its cooperation mainly with the Human Rights Committee and the Committee Against Torture. A delegation of the HR Committee visited the seat of the Inter-American Court in 2016 to discuss procedural and substantive issues common to both institutions. We hope to organize a second meeting with the Human Rights Committee and expand our bilateral cooperation with other treaty-bodies in the coming months.

Over the last couple of years, the CAT has created a space for dialogue with regional courts. In 2017 and 2018 the Inter-American Court participated in very fruitful discussions regarding reparation measures, non-refoulement and monitoring compliance with judgments/decisions. A third event is scheduled to take place next month.

In the Americas we have maintained a positive working relationship with OHCHR regional offices in Panama and Santiago, and also with the country representatives in Guatemala, Colombia and Argentina. Since 2005 the Court has a practice of holding periods of sessions outside its seat, in order to bring its work closer to the peoples of the region. In this context, participation of OHCHR regional offices in activities organized by the Court are always envisaged. In addition to OHCHR participation, the Court has invited other UN institutions such as the High Commissioner for Refugees and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.

It is a common occurrence in the litigation before the Court that parties offer expert witness testimonies by Special Rapporteurs, members of treaty-bodies and even OHCHR staff. We encourage that practice, as the high-level interventions by UN experts bring additional value to the interpretation of the American Convention on Human Rights and make sure we have a global perspective and up-to-date developments on international human rights standards at hand.

Likewise, we encourage the OHCHR to participate in our procedures as Friend of the Court. For instance, the Working Group on Enforced Disappearances made a submission regarding a contentious case last year and the High Commissioner for Refugees has participated twice in advisory opinions that dealt with children migrants and the right to asylum. Staff from the Court regularly participate in regional meetings and capacity building activities initiated by the High Commissioner for Refugees in the Americas.

This year also saw the first exchange of staff between the IA Court and the OHCHR, according to Human Rights Council resolution 34/17 and the establishment of a dedicated program for regional human rights mechanism to gain experience in the UN human rights system. We believe this fellowship was extremely valuable and would like to extend it so that OHCHR staff can gain experience at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights as well.

**Turning to our cooperation with regional mechanisms**, last July the Court held a working meeting with the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the European Court of Human Rights, to promote dialogue and cooperation on their functioning and challenges.

Also, the Presidents of the three regional human rights courts signed the “San José Declaration”, the purpose of which was to establish a Permanent Bi-Annual Forum for Institutional Dialogue among these regional courts, which also aims to facilitate exchanges on case law and legal developments.

Over the last three years, delegations of Judges, Registrars and staff from the Inter-American, European and African Courts have visited each other to participate in seminars or workshops and strengthen cooperation on themes such as reparations, compliance, and developments in case law.

In 2018, Judges of the Inter-American Court also visited the Court of Justice of the European Union, the European Committee of Social Rights, the Department on Execution of Judgments of the Council of Europe to share experiences on monitoring compliance and increasing fulfilment of judgments issued by the European and the Inter-American Courts of Human Rights.

Before I conclude my presentation, Mr. Chairperson, I would like to stress that all these activities, visits and meetings should have the purpose of strengthening the protection of victims’ human rights afforded by the interventions of our institutions. The effects of recent cooperation are visible in more cross-referencing in judgments or decisions, and more coordinated approaches to common challenges, both institutional and substantive.

As the President of the Court mentioned in 2016, “we must see every step taken in the direction of strengthening the protection of human rights as an opportunity for dialogue and convergence, rather than an isolated move lost in momentum.”

I hope this workshop and the future cooperation between UN and regional mechanisms will proceed with more speed and dynamism and provide concrete avenues for thematic engagement and cooperation to the benefit of victims. Thank you.