Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear colleagues and friends,

Thank you for joining us today and I thank Pr. Decaux for reminding us all of why and how the Convention was crafted, of its objectives. It is important to pay tribute to those who have been and who continue to be at the forefront of this fight every day, in all regions of the world.

Why a World Congress on ED
So why a World Congress on ED? Another Congress?

When the French ambassador, HE Bernard Kessedjian presented the draft Convention to the Human Rights Council, he asked its members to “make of yesterday’s big hope, a reality for tomorrow.” “Faire de ce grand espoir d’hier, une réalité pour demain.”

That was back in 2006. Since then, progress has been made thanks to the Convention and to the Committee on ED, its guardian and to the WGEID.

However, with 72 States parties, we are far from the universal ratification and implementation necessary to prevent and eradicate ED.
That’s the situation.

And so, the main objective of the World Congress on ED is to make progress towards this goal: make the Convention, which is the basis of the global fight against ED, universal. This is our North Star. We have a direction, a path to follow.

The good news is that much progress can be done. Provided we all work and take action together, a formula that has proved successful. The WCED aims to create the conditions for progress to be made.

The WCED will take place in Geneva, from 14 to 16 January next year. Geneva, where the Convention was drafted and adopted by the HR Council at its very first session in its very first resolution.

The WCED will create a unique opportunity for all actors to work together and develop a concrete action plan, putting the voices and needs of victims at the core of the strategy.

This is about joining forces, to find solutions together. Which is why it will be a multi-actor event, bringing together States, CSOs including associations of victims, experts, international and regional organisations, NHRIs.

More good news: thanks to previous and ongoing efforts, 28 States have already committed to ratify the Convention (UPR, UDHR 75). If these pledges are fulfilled, we can reach the symbolic number of 100 ratifications. This is not a numbers game of course but about showing commitment to the global fight against ED.

How will be get there? How will the WC reach its objective?
The whole approach is based on partnerships, collaboration: learning from different experiences, practices and successful strategies. Also listening to the victims and putting them back at the centre.
Not only because this is the right thing to do. This has also proved successful in previous campaigns, as Pr. Decaux reminded us.

We, at CEDI, are organizers but the event will be shaped by stakeholders.

To gather input from all involved actors, CEDI is launching a process of broad, inclusive consultations in 4 stages.

1. Broad regional consultations
Regional consultations are being organised in coordination with OHCHR regional offices, the CED and the WGEID. Their purpose is to gather input from local actors based on their experience, successful strategies and challenges, and also share suggestions about their priority issues for the World Congress. These consultations will be held online in May and June. They will be public. All the information will be available on the WCED website.
In parallel, Core States will organise consultations with their peers in Geneva, to give an opportunity to all States, parties and non parties to the Convention to learn from each other and also provide their input to the WCED.

2. Roundtable of experts and key actors (including victims, CSOs, State representatives, NHRIs, international and regional mechanisms and intergovernmental organizations)

On the basis of the regional consultations, a roundtable of experts and key actors will discuss the main take-aways and develop the programme, as well as the draft outcome document to be considered and adopted at the event.

3. Consultation on the draft action plan with all actors prior to the World Congress
The agenda and the draft action plan will be shared with all actors prior to the Congress, to give them the opportunity to review the proposal.

4. Discussion and adoption of the action plan during the Congress
The WCED itself. All participants will have the opportunity to share their suggestions, action plan and pledges to promote the ratification of the Convention and its implementation; and to identify the actions to be carried out, responsibilities and respective timeline in the different regions of the world. All participants will be able to register pledges, individual or joint/collective, which will be an opportunity to show commitment and build partnerships as part of the action plan.
The submission form is already available. Access it via the QR code on the flyer and on WCED website. Pledges can be individual or collective/multi-actor.
We will provide model pledges in the coming weeks.

What is important to remember about the process is that all actors will be consulted at every stage.

The WCED represents a key step of the mobilisation but it is not an end in itself. It is an opportunity for all actors to agree on a common strategy that translates into a concrete action plan.

The organisation of the WCED itself is very much a team exercise and I would like to thank our partners: CEDI’s Core States, the OHCHR, the CED, the WGEID. But also CSO partners: the ICJ and FIDH, closely linked to the Convention and committed to the fight against impunity. I also thank the Service for Int’l Solidarity of the State of Geneva/service de la solidarité internationale de l’Etat de Genève, thanks to whom victims from all continents will be able to come and take part in the WCED and the Geneva Human Rights Platform who provides us, organisers and partners, with a space to meet and consult and who will host the roundtable in September.
I also thank supporters amongst civil society, including families, experts, academia etc. for sharing their thoughts, facilitating contacts.

I encourage others to join us, to support the organisation of the event. Every little helps, to make this event as inclusive and as impactful as possible.

The countdown has begun on the WCED website: 292 days left. In the meantime, we encourage all actors to take part in the pre-Congress consultations, to think about the contribution they can make towards our goal: to make the Convention universal and ED a practice of the past.

We, at CEDI, stand ready to work constructively with everyone and to facilitate participation to the WCED in any way we can.

Please, don’t hesitate to reach out.

Many thanks for your time and attention.