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COMMITTEE OF THE PARTIES COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONVENTION ON ACTION AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

32nd meeting of the Committee of the Parties

Strasbourg, 16 June 2023

MEETING REPORT

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Agenda item 1: Opening of the meeting

1. The Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (hereinafter referred to respectively as "the Committee" and "the Convention") held its 32nd meeting on 16 June 2023 in Strasbourg. The meeting was held in a hybrid format, with some members participating online via the platform KUDO. Pending the election of the new Chair of the Committee, the meeting was opened and chaired by the Vice-Chair, Ambassador Spassova.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the draft agenda

2. The Vice-Chair invited the Committee to adopt the revised draft agenda of the meeting. The representative of Belarus, Mr Kyrill Hrusheuski, who participated online via KUDO, expressed his objection to the inclusion of item 3a (modalities of participation of Belarus in the work of the Committee of the Parties) in the revised draft agenda of the meeting on the grounds that it had been added a week prior to the meeting, which in his view was against the deadline of four weeks for distributing working documents envisaged in Rule 11 of the Rules of Procedure of the Committee.

3. Several representatives of State Parties (Czech Republic, Ukraine and Switzerland) intervened in favour of keeping item 3a on the agenda, referring to the Committee of Ministers' decision on the "Modalities for the participation of Belarus in open conventions" (CM/Del/Dec(2022)1445/10.4), which had invited all convention-based bodies to take a decision on this matter. It was noted that at its previous meeting (25 November 2022), the Committee had not discussed this matter as the meeting had included the adoption of a recommendation in respect of Belarus, which warranted the participation of Belarus in that meeting. However, on 1 June 2023, a formal request by Ambassador Borys Tarasyuk (Ukraine) had been submitted to place on the agenda of the current meeting the issue of the participation on Belarus in meetings of the Committee. Several members expressed the view that the revision of the draft agenda did not contradict the Rules of Procedure of the Committee.

4. In order to make a decision, the item was put to the vote by means of the following question: "Do you accept to withdraw item 3a from the agenda?". With 36 votes against, two abstentions and three votes in favour, the proposal of the Belarusian representative was rejected.

5. The agenda, as adopted by the Committee, is set out in Appendix I. The list of participants is set out in Appendix II.

Agenda item 3: Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee of the Parties

6. The Vice-Chair indicated that following the departure from Strasbourg of Ambassador Christian Meuwly (Switzerland), who had previously served as Chair of the Committee, and the expiry of her own term of office as Vice-Chair on 17 June 2023, the Committee was invited to hold elections for its Chair and Vice-Chair.

7. The Executive Secretary informed the Committee that the Secretariat had received an expression of interest from the current Vice-Chair of the Committee, Ambassador Maria Spassova (Bulgaria), to become the new Chair. No other candidates were proposed and the Committee elected Ambassador Spassova as its Chair by acclamation for a first term of office of one year.

8. Ambassador Spassova thanked the Committee for the confidence placed in her and stated that she would promote the Convention and its effective implementation, building on the work of the previous Chairs.

9. The new Chair invited members to elect a new Vice-Chair of the Committee. She indicated that Ambassador Jean-Cédric Janssens de Bisthoven (Belgium) had expressed interest in assuming this role. No other candidates were proposed and the Committee elected Ambassador Janssens de Bisthoven as its Vice-Chair by acclamation for a first term of office of one year.

10. Ambassador Janssens de Bisthoven also thanked the Committee for the confidence placed in him and stated that he would do his utmost to support the work of the Committee.

Agenda item 3a: Modalities of participation of Belarus in the work of the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

11. The Chair referred to the decision of the Council of Europe's Ministers' Deputies of 5 October 2022 on the "Modalities for the participation of Belarus in open conventions" (CM/Del/Dec(2022)1445/10.4), inviting all convention-based bodies to decide, in accordance with their Rules of Procedure, on the modalities of the participation of Belarus in the Council of Europe conventions to which it is a party, at the latest by the end of December 2022, and to envisage possible restrictions on the participation of Belarus in meetings or in the adoption of decisions and the right to vote.

12. The Chair recalled the formal request by Ukraine to place on the agenda of the meeting the issue of restricting the participation on Belarus in the meetings of the Committee, and gave the floor to the representative of Ukraine, Mr Iaroslav Zhydenko (Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Ukraine). Mr Zhydenko explained that as the matter was not discussed at the last meeting of Committee in November 2022, this meeting provided an opportunity to implement the Committee of Ministers' decision.

13. The Chair explained that the Committee was invited to consider, decide and vote on three issues: first, on the decision to review the modalities of participation of Belarus in the Committee; second, on the adoption of revised Rules of Procedure which include a new Rule 3.1 ("Restriction of participation of a Party"); and finally, on the application of the revised Rules of Procedure to Belarus. The Chair recalled that voting required the quorum and that decisions of the Committee are taken by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast. She also noted that all 48 States Parties to the Convention were represented at the meeting except for Spain, which had apologised.

14. The voting was conducted via KUDO and was divided into three questions, one per issue (as indicated above). The first question ("Are you in favour of reviewing the modalities of participation of Belarus in the Committee of the Parties to CETS No. 197?") received 33 votes in favour, two votes against and three abstentions. As the first vote was positive, the Committee proceeded with a vote on the second matter. Question two ("Are you in favour of introducing the new Rule 3.1 "Restriction of participation of a Party" into the Rules of Procedure of the Committee?") received 37 votes in favour, one vote against and two abstentions. Following the adoption of the new Rule 3.1, representatives cast their vote concerning the third question ("Are you in favour of applying the newly introduced Rule 3.1 "Restriction of participation of a Party" to Belarus?"). It received 37 votes in favour, one vote against and three abstentions. The application of the new Rule 3.1 was therefore applied to Belarus with immediate effect, and the representative of Belarus was asked to disconnect from the meeting. The text of the new Rule 3.1 "Restriction of participation of a Party" of the Rules of Procedure of the Committee is set out in Appendix III.

Agenda item 4: State of signatures and ratifications of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

15. The Chair noted that no new signatures and/or ratifications had been submitted since the last meeting of the Committee in November 2022. She underlined that following a request by the Tunisian Government, the invitation to accede to the Convention had been extended until 7 February 2024. Further, a meeting with high-ranking Moroccan officials had recently taken place and a possible submission of a request to the Committee of Ministers to invite Morocco to accede to the Convention was discussed.

Agenda item 5: Exchange of views with the President of GRETA

16. The Chair invited Ms Helga Gayer, President of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), to take the floor for the periodic exchange of views with the Committee.

17. Ms Gayer noted that GRETA's activities had been impacted by the war in Ukraine in many different ways, which was why GRETA had decided to dedicate a thematic chapter in its latest (12th) General Report, covering the calendar year 2022, to preventing and detecting trafficking in human beings following Russia's aggression against Ukraine. She indicated that according to information collected by GRETA, the number of confirmed cases of human trafficking of Ukrainian refugees remained low, which could be a sign of the success of the early preventive measures taken to protect Ukrainian refugees and mitigate the risks of trafficking. However, she stressed that cases of trafficking in human beings might be difficult to detect and investigate, making this crime "invisible", and that the social and economic vulnerabilities of the millions of people affected by the war in Ukraine are likely to increase as time goes on. That is why co-ordinated action and rapid exchange of information at national and international level remain crucial to prevent trafficking, detect potential victims, and investigate and prosecute any detected cases.

18. Furthermore, Ms Gayer highlighted the main findings from GRETA's third evaluation round reports concerning the eight countries (Estonia and Greece, as part of the second evaluation round, and Azerbaijan, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia and Spain, as part of the third round) which were the subject of draft recommendations by the Committee of the Parties at the meeting. These reports highlighted improvement in the legislation, policy and practice of the countries concerned, but at the same time showed that there were several persistent gaps and challenges, due to lack of political will, resources or training.

19. GRETA's President stated that in 2022, GRETA had followed an intensive work schedule, including four plenary meetings and 13 country evaluation visits, which was the highest number of evaluations in any given year organised by GRETA so far. After the delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, GRETA was back on track, aiming to complete the third round of evaluation of the Convention in respect of most State Parties and to launch the fourth evaluation round, with a focus on addressing vulnerabilities to human trafficking, including those related to the use information and communication technology.

20. In addition, Ms Gayer referred to the recently organised sixth annual meeting of National Anti-trafficking Co-ordinators and Rapporteurs from 60 countries across the Council of Europe and OSCE geographical areas, in Strasbourg. Participants had discussed how to improve the identification and assistance of victims of transnational trafficking, the proactive use of financial investigations, the prevention and detection of trafficking for the purpose of forced criminality, as well as the mandates and roles of National Anti-trafficking Co-ordinators and Rapporteurs. The full text of Ms Gayer's statement is set out in Appendix IV.

21. The representative of France, Ms Roxana Maracineanu (Secretary General of MIPROF, the inter-ministerial coordination body on human trafficking of France), thanked GRETA for its work and underlined the relevance of the thematic areas which would be covered by the fourth evaluation round. She noted that the third national action plan on combating human trafficking was under preparation and referred to the efforts made by France to support Ukrainian refugees.

Agenda item 6: Examination of GRETA's reports on the implementation of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Estonia and Greece (second evaluation round) and Azerbaijan, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia and Spain (third evaluation round) and adoption of recommendations in respect of these Parties

22. The Chair of the Committee recalled that since the last meeting of the Committee, GRETA had adopted and published two final reports under the second round of implementation of the Convention, concerning Estonia and Greece, and six final reports under the third evaluation round, concerning Azerbaijan, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia and Spain. The eight draft recommendations based on these reports had been made available to the Committee four weeks before the meeting and members had been invited to send any proposals for amendments by 12 June 2023. The Secretariat had not received any proposals for amendments to the draft recommendations in advance of the meeting. The Chair noted that the two draft recommendations on Estonia and Greece followed the model of recommendations under the second evaluation round, setting a one-year deadline for informing the Committee of the Parties of the measures taken, whereas the other six draft recommendations followed the model of recommendations under the third evaluation round, setting a two-year deadline for informing the Committee of the Parties of the measures taken.

Second evaluation round

6.1. Estonia

23. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Estonia.

24. Ms Anu Leps (Advisor at the Criminal Policy Department of the Ministry of Justice of Estonia) expressed her gratitude to GRETA for the co-operation in the course of the second evaluation, and indicated that the implementation of the recommendations made following GRETA's report would be discussed at a round-table to be organised in September.

25. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Estonia and decided to request the Estonian Government to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 16 June 2024.

6.2. Greece

26. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Greece.

27. Mr Michael Nakos (Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Greece), who joined the meeting online, thanked GRETA for the excellent co-operation during the second evaluation of Greece and expressed commitment to continue this co-operation. He referred to steps taken by Greece to improve the fight against human trafficking, including legislative amendments, a fully operational National Referral Mechanism, the adoption of a National Emergency Response Mechanism for unaccompanied children, and strengthening of the Labour Inspectorate.

28. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Greece and decided to request the Greek Government to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 16 June 2024.

Third evaluation round

6.3. Azerbaijan

29. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Azerbaijan.

30. Mr Samir Garayev (Head of Division of the Main Department on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings at the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Azerbaijan), who joined online, could not intervene due to technical problems. Therefore, Mr Tale Aliyev (Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan), who was present in the room, continued his intervention. Mr Aliyev thanked GRETA for the constructive co-operation during the third evaluation of Azerbaijan. He referred to recent developments, which include an increase in the number of lawyers providing legal assistance to victims, the amendment of the rules of the National Referral Mechanism, and the approval of new Rules of Procedure of the Working Group on Combating Human Trafficking. The full text of the statement is set out in Appendix V.

31. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Azerbaijan and decided to request the Azerbaijani Government to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 16 June 2025.

6.4. North Macedonia

32. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning North Macedonia.

33. Ms Svetlana Vlahovic Dimanovska (Head of Sector for negotiations and EU integration at the Ministry of Internal Affairs of North Macedonia) noted that GRETA's report was objective and provided valuable guidance. She referred to several previous recommendations which had been implemented, in particular adopting an inter-agency approach and strong partnerships with civil society, setting up five mobile teams at local level, and adopting a new Law on State Compensation with support from the Council of Europe.

34. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of North Macedonia and decided to request the Government of North Macedonia to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 16 June 2025.

6.5. Poland

35. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Poland.

36. Ms Marta Czapka (Section Coordinator of the Team for Coordination of Counteracting Trafficking in Human Beings at the Ministry of the Interior and Administration of Poland), who joined online, thanked GRETA for its efforts to carry out the third evaluation visit to Poland during a difficult period, following Russia's aggression against Ukraine. She referred to the enormous task which faced Poland as a result of the arrival of millions of Ukrainian refugees and noted that all possible measures had been taken to ensure safe conditions for them. Further, she noted that GRETA's report had acknowledged certain positive changes, including legislative amendments, increased funding for victim assistance, and the organisation of information campaigns on trafficking. Ms Czapka also referred to the recent organisation by the Council of Europe of a seminar in Warsaw on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation. The text of the statement made by Ms Czapka is set out in Appendix VI.

37. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Poland and decided to request the Polish Government to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 16 June 2025.

6.6. Serbia

38. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Serbia.
39. No representative of Serbia intervened.
40. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Serbia and decided to request the Serbian Government to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 16 June 2025.

6.7. Slovenia

41. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Slovenia.
42. Ms Suzana Ivanovič (Ministry of the Interior of Slovenia), who joined the meeting online, thanked GRETA for the constructive dialogue during the third evaluation round and stated that the Inter-Ministerial Group of Trafficking would be guided by the recommendations and will address them. She referred to recent developments, including the adoption of a new national anti-trafficking Action Plan for 2023-2024 and legislative amendments to the Act on Compensation of Victims of Crime, enabling victims to apply for state compensation regardless of their nationality.
43. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Slovenia and decided to request the Slovenian Government to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 16 June 2025.

6.8. Spain

44. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Spain.
45. No Spanish representative intervened.
46. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Spain and decided to request the Spanish Government to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 16 June 2025.

Agenda item 7: Government reports submitted in reply to Committee of the Parties recommendations

47. The Chair of the Committee noted that, since the previous meeting of the Committee, reports concerning the steps taken to implement previous Committee of the Parties' recommendations had been submitted by the Governments of Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro and Romania, in the context of the third evaluation round of the Convention. The Chair invited the representatives of the countries concerned to take the floor concerning their authorities' replies to the Committee of the Parties' recommendations.

48. GRETA's President indicated that round-table meetings had been organised in all of the above-mentioned countries in 2022-2023 in order to discuss the implementation of the third round recommendations and ways in which the Council of Europe could provide further assistance.

7.1. Albania

49. Due to a technical problem, Ms Mimoza Qyra, Head of Anti-trafficking Sector at the Ministry of Interior could not participate online.
50. The Chair invited GRETA's President to provide comments on the report submitted by Albania. Ms Gayer stated that according to the report submitted by the authorities, there was an important number of training activities on human trafficking, sensitisation of the general public, and the setting up of mobile

units for the detection of potential victims of trafficking. A new National Action Plan for the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings has been adopted for the period 2021-2023. However, Ms Gayer noted the decrease in the number of investigations and prosecutions for human trafficking since the last GRETA report. The absence of compensation of trafficked persons also continued to be an issue of concern. Assistance to victims continued to be mainly provided in three NGO shelters, but the authorities did not indicate an increase in public funding to ensure the provision of effective assistance.

7.2. Bulgaria

51. Ms Ernesta Rousseva (Chief Expert of the Secretariat of the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of Bulgaria) referred to the organisation in January 2023 of high-level meetings between the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the Bulgarian authorities, in order to discuss ways to improve the national response to trafficking. Referring to the political instability in Bulgaria in the last years, she expressed hope that the new Government would treat the fight against human trafficking as a priority. Ms Rousseva highlighted some of the steps taken in response to the recommendation, including the adoption by the Prosecutor General's Office of detailed instructions for the organisation of the work of prosecutors in relation to pre-trial proceedings opened for trafficking in human beings, and the setting up of a working group to deal with the issues of data collection and victim compensation. No legislative changes had been made and the sustainability of the shelters for victims of trafficking was threatened by the lack of funding.

52. The Chair invited GRETA's President to provide comments on the report presented. GRETA's President noted that the report submitted by the Bulgarian authorities did not address all the urgent issues included in GRETA's third report. Positive developments included the training provided to lawyers, social workers and psychologists, as well as volunteers, crisis centres and NGOs working with people fleeing the war in Ukraine. However, no legislative changes had been made to enable victims to effectively access compensation from offenders, the procedure for claiming state compensation had not been simplified, and no progress had been made on setting up a state compensation fund which uses confiscated assets from perpetrators. The budget of the National Commission for Combating Human Trafficking remained limited (around 230 000 euros per year), in particular the funding available for victim assistance and the running of specialised shelters. It was not indicated what measures had been taken to guarantee access to health care to all victims, nor whether steps had been taken to enshrine in law the recovery and reflection period.

7.3. Croatia

53. Mr Alen Tahiri (National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator and Director of the Government Office on Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities of Croatia) thanked GRETA and the Secretariat for the fruitful discussions that had taken place in Zagreb in October 2022 during the round-table meeting. He also referred to the work underway for the preparation of a new national action plan for combating trafficking.

54. The Chair invited GRETA's President to provide comments on the report presented by Croatia. GRETA's President noted that the report submitted by Croatia covered the most urgent recommendations arising from the third evaluation round. She welcomed the establishment by the Bar Association of a list of lawyers specialised in providing legal assistance to victims of trafficking, the provision of training on human trafficking to lawyers, and the implementation of three projects which provided social services to socially disadvantaged persons, including victims of trafficking. The authorities had reportedly taken steps to improve the identification and assistance to child victims of trafficking. On the other hand, it did not appear from the report that improvements had been made to enable victims of trafficking to receive compensation from perpetrators or the State. Further, there was still no provision on non-punishment of victims of trafficking in Croatian law, nor had any guidance for prosecutors been issued since GRETA's third evaluation report. The report provided a detailed overview of the rules related to the protection of victims and witnesses in criminal proceedings, but did not address concretely the recommendations to avoid re-traumatisation and intimidation of victims by perpetrators.

7.4. Denmark

55. Mr Niklas Johansen (Head of Division in the Ministry of Justice of Denmark), who joined online, noted that the Danish Government appreciated the continuous dialogue with GRETA and took the recommendations very seriously. He referred to the political agreement reached in December 2020 on the financial framework of the Danish police and the public prosecution service which added more financial resources to both authorities, including more resources to the police to handle cases of forced labour as well as the establishment of a new Special Crime Unit in the Police to assist police districts in cases related to trafficking. He further noted the publication in 2021 of a report by an inter-ministerial working group on initiatives to protect vulnerable foreign workers and victims of trafficking. In June 2022, a new provision of the Criminal Code, criminalising exploitation of workers under manifestly unreasonable conditions, had entered into force. The full text of Mr Johansen's statement is set out in Appendix VII.

56. The Chair invited GRETA's President to provide comments on the report presented by Denmark. Ms Gayer welcomed the adoption of a new National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking for 2022-2025 and the increased funding for anti-trafficking action, as well as the number of training activities for professionals dealing with human trafficking cases. She noted that since GRETA's third evaluation report, there had been four judgments convicting five individuals for human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, and in three of these judgments the victims had been awarded compensation. The report further mentioned the publication of a guidance for staff at the Ellebæk immigration detention centre on how to act when confronted with a suspected case of human trafficking. However, no changes had been made to the criteria for awarding state compensation, and there had been no legal changes concerning the recovery and reflection period and residence permits for victims of trafficking. While the report referred to co-operation with NGOs, it was not evident how they were involved in the identification of victims of trafficking.

7.5. Georgia

57. Ms Ketevan Sarajishvili (Head of the International Relations and Legal Cooperation Department at the Ministry of Justice of Georgia), who joined online, highlighted the main steps reported in reply to the recommendation. She referred to the preparation of a handbook for the Permanent Group to identify victims, the training of the Permanent Group and the extension of the mandate of victim and witness coordinators to participate in criminal proceedings and provide support to victims. Further, she noted the considerable increase in the number of labour inspectors and the development of a special guideline on trafficking identification for labour inspectors. The full text of Ms Sarajishvili's statement is set out in Appendix VIII.

58. The Chair invited GRETA's President to provide comments on the report presented by Georgia. Ms Gayer welcomed the adoption of the new National Action Plan on Combatting Trafficking for 2023-2024. She also noted that following an amendment to the Anti-trafficking Law, applying for state compensation was no longer conditional on failure to obtain compensation from the perpetrator. Another positive development was the adoption of a specific provision in the Law on Public Procurement making it possible to blacklist companies involved in human trafficking. Despite the improvements, Ms Gayer noted with concern that there was no information on how the authorities planned to enable trafficking victims to obtain compensation from the perpetrators in criminal proceedings. Further, there was little relevant new information regarding measures to improve the proactive identification of victims and the capacity of the Permanent Group in this regard. The authorities' report did not provide information on steps taken to ensure that human trafficking offences are not re-qualified as other offences which carry lighter penalties and deprive victims of trafficking of access to protection, support and compensation.

7.6. Republic of Moldova

59. Ms Diana Doros (National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator) highlighted the importance of the recommendations in the reinforcement of the national efforts to properly implement the Anti-Trafficking Convention. She referred to the drafting of a new policy document for the period 2024-2028 that will continue the actions started on the basis of the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating trafficking for 2018-2023, the reform of the State Labour Inspectorate and the opening of a Barnahus-type integrated regional assistance centre for child victims and witnesses of crimes. The full text of Ms Doros' statement is set out in Appendix IX.

60. The Chair invited GRETA's President to provide comments on the report presented by the Republic of Moldova. Ms Gayer noted that a number of positive developments had taken place, including the issuing of guidelines and instructions with the aim of strengthening the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases and facilitating the provision of assistance to human trafficking victims. Further, she informed that information materials had been distributed and an online campaign had been launched in order to prevent human trafficking among persons fleeing the war in Ukraine. Despite these improvements, GRETA's President noted that no steps had been taken to strengthen the human resources of the Permanent Secretariat dealing with the co-ordination of the implementation of the National Action Plan on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings. She also noted that the child protection services remained understaffed and that limited progress appeared to have been made in the areas of preventing and combating trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation and victims' access to compensation. The report does not provide information on measures taken to tackle the excessive length of criminal proceedings in human trafficking cases.

7.7. Montenegro

61. Ms Ivana Mašanović (Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Montenegro) affirmed the commitment of the Montenegrin authorities to combat human trafficking by ensuring an adequate implementation of the Convention. She informed the Committee that several activities were planned in this regard and that the Action Plan for 2024 would focus on the remaining challenges recognised. The full text of Ms Mašanović's statement is set out in Appendix X.

62. The Chair invited GRETA's President to provide comments on the report submitted by Montenegro. Ms Gayer welcomed the development of information materials for foreign nationals, the increase in the number of criminal cases concerning trafficking, as well as the initiation of legislative amendments expanding the definition of trafficking in human beings and increasing the punishment for certain related provisions, the inclusion of a non-punishment provision and a separate offence on the sale of children. Further, she noted the increase in the number of labour inspectors, the adoption of standard operating procedures concerning the treatment of unaccompanied and separated children, and the upcoming establishment of a state shelter for children and youth victims of trafficking. However, she noted with concern that no victims of trafficking had benefited from free legal aid during the reporting period and that no victims of trafficking had exercised the right to compensation in criminal proceedings.

7.8. Romania

63. Ms Delia Negraru (Romanian National Agency against Trafficking in Persons), who joined online, stated that substantial efforts had been made in the reporting period by the Romanian authorities, including the appointment of a new national anti-trafficking coordinator within the Prime Minister Chancellery who will be assisted by a decision-making and strategic coordination committee, the revision of the National Referral Mechanism, and the launch of an application for the registration of all children arriving from Ukraine. The full text of Ms Negraru's statement is set out in Appendix XI.

64. The Chair invited GRETA's President to provide comments on the information presented in the report submitted by the Romanian authorities. Ms Gayer welcomed the organisation of campaigns to raise awareness about the risk of human trafficking among vulnerable groups, especially migrants and asylum seekers, including refugees from Ukraine, as well as children and young people. She also noted positive developments with regard to strengthening the criminal justice response, such as the creation of new posts of financial investigation officers, and an increase in the average sentences given to traffickers. However, Ms Gayer highlighted that there was a lack of clarity about the budgetary allocation for the implementation of the revised National Identification and Referral Mechanism, as well as the absence of specific measures to facilitate access to judicial public aid for victims who wish to claim compensation in civil proceedings. She also mentioned the absence of a victim compensation fund and the lack of staff in the Labour Inspectorate. Finally, she pointed out that limited progress appeared to have been made with regard to victims' access to safe accommodation, their reintegration into society and the provision of adequate funding to NGOs.

Agenda item 8: Information on activities aimed at strengthening the implementation of GRETA's conclusions and the Committee of the Parties' recommendations

65. The Chair gave the floor to the Executive Secretary to update the Committee on co-operation activities. The Executive Secretary informed the Committee of the recent organisation of a seminar in Warsaw to promote implementation of the new Committee of Ministers Recommendation on trafficking for labour exploitation and to start the preparation of a checklist for examining compliance with the recommendation. The revision of the HELP online course on human trafficking was progressing well and the course was expected to be made available in the autumn. A regional round-table meeting on the role of the financial sector in combating human trafficking was being planned for September, in Sarajevo. The next meeting of the network of lawyers specialised to provide assistance to victims of trafficking would take place in October 2023. Further, the Executive Secretary referred to the round-table meetings in Bulgaria, Denmark, Georgia, Montenegro and Romania, to discuss progress in the implementation of the recommendations made by GRETA and the Committee of the Parties in the context of the third round of evaluation of the Convention. The Executive Secretary also referred to the anti-trafficking co-operation projects which continued in North Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the new project in Malta.

Agenda item 9: Information on the anti-trafficking activities of other Council of Europe bodies and international organisations of interest to the Committee of the Parties

66. The Chair gave the floor to the Executive Secretary to provide relevant information. The Executive Secretary updated the Committee on the progress of the revision of the EU Directive on combating trafficking in human beings (2011/36/EU) and the forthcoming exchange between the EU Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator and GRETA. She also provided examples of synergies between the Council of Europe and the OSCE in the area of combating human trafficking, such as the recent joint meeting of national anti-trafficking coordinators and rapporteurs, and the forthcoming regional round-table on the role of financial institutions in preventing and detecting human trafficking, in Sarajevo in September 2023.

Agenda item 10: Dates of future meetings

67. The Committee decided to hold its next meeting in the course of December 2023.

Agenda item 11: Other business

Agenda item 12: Adoption of the list of decisions taken

68. The Committee approved the decisions taken at the meeting, namely the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair for a one-year term of office, the adoption of the amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings introducing the new Rule 3.1 "Restriction of participation of a Party", the application of the new Rule 3.1 to Belarus, and the adoption of recommendations in respect of Estonia, Greece, Azerbaijan, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia and Spain.

Appendix I Agenda

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the draft agenda
3. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee of the Parties
- 3a. Modalities of participation of Belarus in the work of the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
4. State of signatures and ratifications of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
5. Exchange of views with the President of GRETA
6. Examination of GRETA's reports on the implementation of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Estonia and Greece (second evaluation round) and Azerbaijan, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia and Spain (third evaluation round) and adoption of recommendations in respect of these Parties

Second evaluation round

- 6.1. Estonia
- 6.2. Greece

Third evaluation round

- 6.3. Azerbaijan
- 6.4. North Macedonia
- 6.5. Poland
- 6.6. Serbia
- 6.7. Slovenia
- 6.8. Spain

7. Government reports submitted in reply to Committee of the Parties recommendations

Third evaluation round

- 7.1. Albania
- 7.2. Bulgaria
- 7.3. Croatia
- 7.4. Denmark
- 7.5. Georgia
- 7.6. Republic of Moldova
- 7.7. Montenegro
- 7.8. Romania

8. Information on activities aimed at strengthening the implementation of GRETA's conclusions and the Committee of the Parties' recommendations
9. Information on the anti-trafficking activities of other Council of Europe bodies and international organisations of interest to the Committee of the Parties
10. Dates of future meetings
11. Other business
12. Adoption of the list of decisions taken

Appendix II List of participants

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Others / Autres

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President of GRETA

Secretariat / Secrétariat

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Appendix III

Revised Rules of Procedure of the Committee of the Parties to the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings – document CP(2020)01

Rule 3 – Restricted composition

The Committee may decide to hold sessions in a more restricted composition than that outlined in rule 2 above; however, it may not restrict the participation of members in any session, except in accordance with Rule 3.1.

Rule 3.1 – Restriction of participation of a Party

The Committee may decide on measures to restrict the participation in its work of a Party that has ceased to be a member of the Council of Europe following the procedure launched under Article 8 of the Statute of the Council of Europe for a serious violation of Article 3 of the Statute. Similarly, measures restricting the participation of a Party can be taken in respect of any non-member state of the Council of Europe concerned by a Committee of Minister decision restricting or suspending relations with it.

Such restriction may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. Restriction of the ability to be elected or act as a chair, vice-chair or member of the bureau of the Committee of the Parties;
- b. Restriction of attendance at meetings (no attendance), while retaining access only to documents related to the monitoring of the implementation of the Convention by the Party concerned and the ability to provide comments in writing;
- c. Limitation of participation to the provision of information and explanations regarding compliance with the obligations under the Convention, with the right to vote, as well as to discussions on proposals for amendments to the treaty and relating to the interpretation of the treaty and/or general guidance in respect of its implementation;
- d. Restriction of the ability to nominate candidates for election as GRETA members;
- e. Restriction of participation in any working groups set up by the Committee.

Any Member of the Committee can submit a reasoned proposal for such a decision to be taken. No participants or observers shall be present during the Committee's examination of the matter. It will be deemed that the proposal has been accepted if it receives two-thirds majority of the votes cast and the decision taken shall have immediate effect.

Once the reasons for the imposition of the restriction or limitation cease to exist, a member concerned can propose to the Committee that the restriction or limitation to participation be lifted. It will be deemed that the proposal has been accepted if it receives two-thirds majority of the votes cast and the decision taken shall have immediate effect.

The restriction or limitation of the participation in the Committee in no way prejudices the rights and obligations that stem from the Convention for the Parties and the financial contribution to the budget of the monitoring mechanism under the Convention.

Appendix IV

Statement by Ms Helga GAYER, President of GRETA

Madame Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having been re-elected as GRETA's President in March, I am delighted to participate once again in the traditional exchange with the Committee of the Parties.

Two days ago, GRETA published the 12th general report on its activities, covering the calendar year 2022, which you have in front of you. I would like to use the occasion of this meeting to highlight some of parts of this report.

The year 2022 was marked by Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, provoking the largest displacement of people in Europe since the Second World War and raising concerns about the risks of the humanitarian crisis being used by traffickers to exploit vulnerable women and children fleeing the war. Throughout the year, GRETA's activities were impacted by the war in Ukraine in many different ways, and it is therefore not surprising that GRETA decided to dedicate a thematic chapter in its latest General Report to preventing and detecting trafficking in human beings following Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The chapter summarises the contents of GRETA's Guidance Note on addressing the risks of trafficking in human beings related to the war in Ukraine, with examples of how different State Parties have reacted to prevent risks of trafficking and exploitation of Ukrainian refugees.

Since the outbreak of the war, GRETA has been collecting information on steps taken to prevent and limit the risks of trafficking of Ukrainian refugees, as well as on any detected cases. The number of confirmed cases of human trafficking of Ukrainian refugees is still low, which may be a sign of the success of the early preventive measures taken to protect Ukrainian refugees and mitigate the risks of trafficking. An important preventive mechanism was the activation by the European Union of its Temporary Protection Directive, establishing official and safe legal routes for people fleeing the war in Ukraine, and offering them a comprehensive set of assistance measures. Countries outside the EU also rapidly activated their own set of protection measures, which is essential to mitigate the risks of trafficking.

The mobilisation of the national authorities, civil society and the international community, and the level of awareness-raising on trafficking related to the war in Ukraine are very high compared to other humanitarian crises. However, trafficking in human beings has always been considered as an "invisible crime" and the use of new technologies to facilitate trafficking makes it even more difficult to detect. The social and economic vulnerabilities of the millions of people affected by the war in Ukraine are likely to increase as time goes on. That is why co-ordinated action and rapid exchange of information at national and international level are crucial to prevent trafficking, detect potential victims, and investigate and prosecute any detected cases. GRETA will continue to monitor the situation and collect relevant information.

Our collective duty is to ensure that the fight against human trafficking remains at the top of the agenda. The unprecedented situation stemming from the war in Ukraine must be an opportunity for States to design and implement comprehensive strategies to deal more effectively with the risks of human trafficking faced by all people seeking international protection.

Since your last meeting in November 2022, GRETA has finalised and published eight reports (two under the second evaluation round, concerning **Estonia** and **Greece**, and six under the third evaluation round, concerning **Azerbaijan, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia** and **Spain**). These reports are the subject of draft recommendations submitted to you for consideration and adoption today.

As evidenced by GRETA's reports, there have been a number of improvements in states' responses to human trafficking, including the adoption of new legislation and national strategies or action plans to combat human trafficking, many of which reflect previous recommendations made by GRETA and the Committee of the Parties. Some countries have set up or reinforced their co-ordination structures and specialised anti-trafficking bodies, others have appointed independent national anti-trafficking rapporteurs. Moreover, the funding provided to action against human trafficking and in particular the assistance to victims has increased in some of the countries concerned.

However, there are persisting gaps and new challenges, including those linked to the increasing use of information and communication technology. Some of the problems in the implementation of GRETA's recommendations are due to lack of political will, resources or training. For example, the low number of convictions for human trafficking is a concern raised in many GRETA reports. Human trafficking cases are complex crimes, frequently with a transnational dimension, and often involving multiple victims and perpetrators. Lack of resources and prioritisation result in low prosecution and conviction rates. Over-reliance on victims' testimonies and the quick return of victims to their countries of origin is another factor which impacts the authorities' ability to prosecute and convict traffickers. Further, the lack of effective access to compensation for victims of trafficking is a problem highlighted by GRETA in all the countries which are subject to discussion today.

In 2022, GRETA followed an intensive work schedule, including four plenary meetings and 13 country evaluation visits, which is the highest number of evaluations in any given year organised by GRETA so far. After the delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, GRETA is back on track, aiming to complete the third round of evaluation of the Convention in respect of most state parties this year. At its forthcoming plenary meeting in two weeks' time, GRETA will approve the questionnaire for the fourth evaluation round of the Convention and will start sending it to the first countries that will undergo the fourth evaluation. For this new round of evaluation of the Convention, GRETA intends to focus on preventing and detecting vulnerabilities to human trafficking, as well as the impact of information and communication technology on trafficking in human beings. At the same time, we will follow up on a number of issues which remain to be addressed in each country.

GRETA could not have performed this intensive programme of activities without the unfailing support provided by its Secretariat, which was temporarily reinforced in 2022 as a result of the relocation of the unspent budget from the years affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. GRETA hopes that this reinforcement will be made permanent, reflecting the increase in the number of State Parties to the Convention and in the volume of activities, which are not only related to monitoring work, but also to a range of follow-up activities, such as round-table meetings, studies, capacity building and networking.

Last week, here in Strasbourg, the Council of Europe joined forces with the OSCE to co-organise the sixth annual meeting of National Anti-trafficking Co-ordinators and Rapporteurs, bringing together participants from some 60 countries from the Council of Europe and OSCE regions, and beyond. The meeting focused on better identifying and assisting victims of transnational trafficking, enhancing proactive use of financial investigations, understanding and addressing trafficking in human beings for the purpose of forced criminality, and ways to enhance the mandates and roles of the National Anti-trafficking Co-ordinators and Rapporteurs.

The Council of Europe action against trafficking in human beings was the subject of a recent evaluation by the Directorate of Internal Oversight. The report from the independent evaluation assessed both 'what' changes were observed and 'why' they have been achieved. According to the report, there is unequivocal evidence that monitoring and co-operation projects have contributed to increasing State Parties' compliance with the Convention, prompting changes to legislation, policies and practice. The report also noted that monitoring activities in the period 2016-2021 contributed to triggering 46 changes in legislation, 38 at the policy level and 76 in practice (in 38 different states that were monitored during this period).

This illustrates how the monitoring mechanism of the Council of Europe Anti-Trafficking Convention - GRETA and the Committee of the Parties working in tandem - is an integral contributing factor to legislative and policy change. We must make sure that the Council of Europe, being the leading human rights organisation of the European continent, remains actively engaged in combating human trafficking in its member States and beyond, in partnership with other international organisations and civil society, in the spirit of the Reykjavik Declaration.

Thank you for your attention.

Appendix V

**Statement by Mr Tale Aliyev,
Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the Council of Europe
and Mr Samir Garayev,
Police Colonel, Head of Division at the Main Department on Combating Against Human
Trafficking of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Azerbaijan**

Dear Madam Chairperson,

At the outset, we wish to congratulate you and vice-chair on your election and wish you all the success during your tenure.

As a general remark, first, we would like to state that Azerbaijan is committed to pursuing a comprehensive approach to fighting against human trafficking. To this end, the standards and institutional settings of the Council of Europe make a valuable contribution to the development, implementation and evaluation of the policies in the respective field.

In this context, my authorities appreciate the constructive co-operation with GRETA. The third evaluation round of the Convention on Azerbaijan has offered another good opportunity to pursue this cooperation. We would like to extend our gratitude to the experts of the GRETA, Madam Ia Dadunashvili and Mr Georgios Vanikiotis, as well as the representatives of the Secretariat, Mr Mesut Bedirhanoglu and Ms Parvine Ghadami for their hard work during their visit to Azerbaijan, also throughout this exercise.

We are pleased to note that a number of positive developments and the progress achieved in Azerbaijan over the past period in combatting the human trafficking have been acknowledged in the report. Among them, we wish to point out the adoption of the latest National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking for the years of 2020 – 2024. The objective of this Action Plan, which also takes into account the recommendations of GRETA from the previous evaluation rounds, is to ensure the sustainability of measures taken to combat human trafficking, increase the efficiency of interaction between government agencies, ensure the implementation of respective international obligations of Azerbaijan and as well as involve civil society actors in this important process.

As regards the overall assessments of the situation on access to justice and effective remedies for victims of trafficking, as well as some other specific questions in the report concerning Azerbaijan, we have thoroughly considered them and the views and comments received from relevant state bodies of Azerbaijan have been submitted to the GRETA before its approval. We note that the position of Azerbaijani authorities on a number of issues have been reflected in the final report accordingly. Therefore, we don't intend to focus on them in our present intervention, but to reassure that the Government of Azerbaijan is faithful to move forward in bringing the national practice into full compliance with the Convention.

In this connection, we would like just to highlight the most recent measures that have been taken on combating human trafficking in the last 6 months, which also address some of the recommendations in question:

- So, in order to guarantee access to justice, the number of lawyers providing legal assistance to the victims of human trafficking have been increased recently. The contracts were signed between these lawyers and the Main Department on Combatting Against Human Trafficking, and their salaries are paid by the Ministry of Internal Affairs;
- Furthermore, the contract was concluded between the State Assistance Fund and a member of the Bar Association for the provision of legal assistance in filing a civil lawsuit in court on behalf of victims of human trafficking;

- To prevent the risks of human trafficking of foreigners and stateless persons, the analysis of the domestic situation related to their activity in the service sector was included among the main tasks of the Interagency Commission, and the rules of the National Referral Mechanism were amended in this regard;
- Furthermore, in order to more precisely define the status of the Working Group on Combating Against Human Trafficking under the National Coordinator, the Law on Combating THB was amended and the Rules of Procedures of the Working Group was approved by the Cabinet of Ministries last month, on 16 may. I should note that the new rules also envisage the involvement of the civil society actors in the work of the Working Group. To this end, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has already sent a request to the Coalition of the NGOs with a view to ensuring their participation in the Working Group;
- As part of development of the legislative framework, the further relevant amendments and additions have been made to the four Codes and six Laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan last December. These changes in the legislation are mainly related to the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, which is also critical in view of preventing and combatting the trafficking of children;
- The rules for receiving a victim of human trafficking to the state shelter and assistance centre has been simplified, and the service passport is drawn up for the victims of human trafficking on the spot;
- The confidential database for the services and the result of those services for the victims of human trafficking which are carried out in the state shelter has been established;
- Furthermore, for ensuring the professional psychological assistance to the victim human trafficking, the psychologists have been involved in the work of the state shelter;
- Last but not least, the methodological manual on operational measures to prevent and prosecute human trafficking crimes has been prepared and put into use.

To conclude, we wish once again thank the GRETA and the Secretariat for their co-operation. We look forward to continue our fruitful collaboration in implementing the relevant recommendations that will be adopted today by the Committee of the Parties.

Appendix VI

**Statement by Ms Marta Clapka,
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Department for International Affairs and Migration,
Ministry of Interior and Administration, Poland**

Poland appreciates GRETA's efforts to prepare not only the report, which assesses for the third time Poland's implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on action against trafficking in human beings but also evaluation itself. For Poland it was an extremely interesting experience considering mainly the political situation in Europe. We met with representatives of GRETA at a special time when we were facing a migration crisis on our Eastern border. Hostilities on the territory of Ukraine cause for example movement of large groups of refugees on the territory of Poland, especially women and children. All measures and countermeasures were launched throughout Poland in order to ensure maximum safe conditions for people fleeing the war. These activities have been given the highest priority.

We appreciate that positive changes was noticed by GRETA's delegation as regards internal activates aimed at counteracting THB in Poland. The progress has been made in several areas, including legislative changes and increased funding for victim assistance. We have some successes as regards prevention and awareness raising through information campaigns.

Poland has so far implemented a number of comprehensive measures to combat trafficking in human beings aimed at for example early diagnosis of trafficking in human beings, continuous monitoring of this phenomenon, providing support and protection to victims, conducting training or proposing legislative changes.

Poland still makes constant efforts to properly address current problems and in view of changing trends. We remain determined to take necessary measures to comply with proposed recommendations especially as regards combating trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation and improving the criminal justice response.

Appendix VII

Statement by Mr Niklas V. Johansen, Head of Division, Ministry of Justice, Denmark

- Thank you for the opportunity to briefly present the report submitted by Denmark on measures taken to comply with the recommendations from the Committee of the Parties from June 2021.
- The Danish Government is taking the evaluations and recommendations from GRETA very seriously and appreciates the continuous dialogue with GRETA regarding issues related to human trafficking.
- I am representing the Danish Ministry of Justice, but several other ministries and authorities have contributed to the report.
- The Danish authorities are continuously working to prevent and fight human trafficking and improve the efforts where necessary. I will just briefly mention a couple of the initiatives taken in recent years.
- In December 2020 a political agreement regarding the financial framework of the Danish police and Prosecution Service was reached. The agreement added more resources to the Danish police and the Public Prosecution Service in general and also added resources to the police to handle cases regarding forced labour. The agreement also ensured the establishment of a new Special Crime Unit (NSK) in the Police with the main objective to strengthen the investigation and prosecution against the most complex economic and organized crime. The unit is also able to handle or provide assistance to the police districts in certain cases regarding THB.
- In 2021 an inter-ministerial working group, which was tasked to work with initiatives to protect vulnerable foreign workers and victims of THB, published a report with recommendations based on a thorough analysis of a broad range of issues related to human trafficking. The working group also looked at experiences from other countries.
- The recommendations from the working group from September 2021 were used to form the Danish National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings 2022-2025. They were also the background for a new provision in the Danish Criminal Code criminalizing exploitation of workers under manifestly unreasonable conditions. The new provision entered into force June 1 2022.
- Combatting human trafficking remains a priority for the Danish Government and Danish authorities and from our side we find the dialogue with GRETA very valuable in this regard.
- We are looking forward to continue the cooperation and the dialogue. Thank you.

Appendix VIII

Statement by Ms Ketevan Sarajishvili, Head of the International Relations and Legal Cooperation Department Ministry of Justice, Georgia

Implementation of GRETA Recommendations by the Georgian Authorities

- ⇒ Thank you and good afternoon everybody!
- ⇒ On behalf of the Government of Georgia and the Ministry of Justice, I'm delighted to be part of this meeting. Regretfully, we did not manage to join you in person, however, I will try to cover most of the topics and recommendations of the expert group which have already been implemented by the Georgian authorities.
- ⇒ Indeed, Georgia's priority is to efficiently combat human trafficking and apply so called "4P" principle in practice.
- ⇒ For that reason, we equally put and diverse resources to prevent crime, proactively identify the cases, protect victims and provide sufficient services, and extend partnership local-wise and at international level.
- ⇒ All these measures are reflected in the National Action Plan for 2023-2024, which is coordinated and monitored by the Interagency Anti-Trafficking Council, chaired by the Minister of Justice.
- ⇒ External evaluations are always the best judges for the quality of domestic anti-trafficking efforts. I cannot avoid mentioning the very recent US TIP Report which was published yesterday. Georgia remains in Tier 1, the highest ranking position, and shares the leading position among 30 countries out of assessed 188 states.
- ⇒ Obviously, we do acknowledge that there is always room for improvement and in this pass, GRETA always remains for us as a hand-to-hand partner and provides very on-point recommendations to upgrade our anti-trafficking policy.
- ⇒ Let me provide information about the progress and implementation of GRETA's most recent recommendations:

Protection Cluster:

- ⇒ Here we had 6 recommendations; 5 of them are already implemented and 1 remaining is pending.
- ⇒ For the effective implementation of the recommendations:
 - we have amended the legislation to make easier for the potential victims/victims to get one-off state run compensation, without any preconditions,
 - we have updated the victim identification questionnaire;
 - we have elaborated a special THB handbook for the Permanent Group to identify victims;
 - we have trained members of the Permanent Group;
 - we have extended the mandate of victim and witness coordinators to participate in criminal proceedings and provide sufficient support to victims.

Prevention and Identification Cluster mostly focusing on labour exploitation cases:

- ⇒ Also, here we had 6 recommendations; 5 of them are already implemented and 1 is in the process of implementation.
- ⇒ For the rapid translation of GRETA recommendations into concrete actions:
 - We have ensured the full implementation of the Labour Safety Code;
 - We have installed an institutional guarantee for the application of the Law;
 - A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Criminal Police Department and the Labour Inspectorate Service;
 - We have increased the number of labour inspectors;
 - The special guideline on THB identification for labour inspectors was developed;
 - We have conducted public outreach activities and held information meetings.
- ⇒ Obviously, this is very nutshell of the progress of Georgian authorities. The full version of our report is provided to the Secretariat and I believe it will be accessible online.
- ⇒ Thank you for your attention and for any further questions, I remain at your disposal.

Appendix IX

Statement by Ms Diana Doros, National Co-ordinator, Head of the Co-ordination Directorate in the field of human rights and social dialogue, State Chancellery, Republic of Moldova

Dear members of the Committee Parties,
Dear participants,

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, I would like to reconfirm the commitment in further strengthening efforts in implementing the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and reiterate our acknowledgement to the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings for the efforts in producing the Third evaluation round Report on the actions taken by the Republic of Moldova. The recommendations of the Report have an important role for reinforcing the efforts of the state in the implementation of the Convention.

In this context, I would like to mention some updated information to that presented in the Report of the Republic of Moldova.

1. The Republic of Moldova is in the process of drafting the new policy document in the field of preventing and combating THB for the years 2024-2028. The new policy document will continue the actions started on the basis of the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating THB for the years 2018-2023 and will strengthen the antitrafficking system through continuous actions to prevent THB, through quality services provided to THB victims, well-trained specialists, punishing traffickers and developing partnerships. The recommendations of GRETA Report will be included in the policy document.
2. An important action in protecting the rights and safety of employees, in combating illegal work, is the reform of the State Labor Inspectorate. The reform is centered on three major directions:
 - adaptation of the legal framework and regulations, which would allow inspectors more actions to identify illegal work and apply sanctions, including unannounced visits to companies;
 - modernization of technical equipment, better performing programs and software, including equipping inspectors with video cameras and equipment for recording conversations;
 - developing the skills of the institution's employees through training on new inspection methods and reporting techniques, but also through their training abroad.
3. With regard to the Section 18. of the Report, *Prevention of child trafficking and the identification and assistance of child victims of trafficking*, I would like to mention the activity of the Barnahus-type integrated assistance Center for child victims/witnesses of crimes opened in March 2022, for its first year of activity. Thus, during 2022, 78 children (including refugee children from Ukraine) were assisted in the Center, who benefited from highly specialized integrated services. The most children were assisted in sexual crimes about 65%, followed by family violence crimes 23%, 4% child trafficking and 8% constituting other types of crimes.
4. Furthermore, it has to be mentioned, also, that the crises have changed the patterns of human trafficking, the Republic of Moldova from the country of origin becomes a country of destination. THB for the purpose of labour exploitation it is maintained in case of adult victims, and sexual exploitation in case of child victims. The use of information technologies is increasing, especially as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the refugee crisis in Ukraine. The national authorities pay attention also to some new trends, as exploitation in criminal activities, such as employment of drivers in EU region to transport migrants, trafficking of organs, cells/tissues and the technical-scientific progress of reproductive medicine.

We highly appreciate the cooperation with the CoE and are looking forward to continuing our joint activities also by means of assistance projects provided via the CoE Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova.

Thank you for your attention!

Appendix X

Statement by Ms Ivana Mašanović, Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Montenegro to the Council of Europe

Adequate implementation of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in Montenegro has a positive effect on the overall efforts of the Government of Montenegro in the fight against trafficking in Human Beings.

GRETA, through the given recommendations, stated that progress has been achieved in certain areas, but also pointed to those in which, after the summarized responses from the competent authorities, it is evident that additional activities are needed for their full implementation.

In this regard, the Montenegrin authorities have already planned activities, which are in line with the given recommendations, and through the development of the Action Plan for the implementation of the Montenegrin Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, for the coming 2024, they will be focused on the remaining challenges that are recognized.

In addition to the progress that has been achieved, the Montenegrin authorities will continue necessary activities in order to fully implement the Convention and improve the standards in this area.

In the end, I would like to thank GRETA for good and constructive cooperation with our authorities.

Thank you.

Appendix XI

Statement by Ms Delia Negraru, National Agency against Trafficking in Persons, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Romania

The fight against human trafficking remains a top priority on the executive agenda of Romania. Substantial anti-trafficking efforts have been undertaken in the reporting period by the Romanian authorities along with partners from civil society and the private sector. These efforts further develop previous years' initiatives and improve the coherence of Romania's anti-trafficking system. Our long-term strategic vision is to ensure that this system maintains continuity and room for expansion as it develops in line with European and international approaches in this field. Trafficking in persons is at the crossroads of many areas of intervention and therefore requires strategic coordination and planning across institutions. A number of important measures have been adopted in the reporting period to further strengthen these efforts in multiple areas of action, such as:

- **Leadership and Coordination:** As a result of the Prime Minister of Romania, a new architecture of the anti-trafficking system is in place since 2021. A national anti-trafficking coordinator has been appointed at the level of the Prime Minister Chancellery, a decision-making and strategic coordination Committee has been set up and led by the National coordinator, while the Rapporteur is represented by the National Agency against Trafficking in Persons. This ensures the continuity of the approach and cooperation between responsible state institutions and the other actors involved in these efforts at strategic level.

- **Integrated Plan:** The first Integrated Plan of Measures was developed and approved to respond to international recommendations on trafficking in persons.

- **Identification and Referral Mechanism:** An extensive process of updating the National Identification and Referral Mechanism was completed through a collaborative process with all actors involved and has been adopted through Government Decision. This is a strategic step which leads to a more effective response so that victims can benefit from integrated support based on their needs and specific situation.

- **Early identification:** The first government partnership to train frontline emergency physicians was completed to improve the identification of victims of human trafficking.

- **Action plan for Ukraine:** The Action Plan on the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse, and risks associated with human trafficking for refugees from Ukraine has been approved and is being implemented. The measures taken by the Romanian Government have so far proved effective as no cases of trafficking in persons involving perpetrators or victims from Ukraine were identified in 2022.

- **Online registration system for minors from Ukraine:** A computer application for the registration of all children from Ukraine called *Primero*, has been launched by the National Authority for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption, with technical and financial support from UNICEF, as part of the coordination mechanism within the Ukrainian refugee crisis. It includes a child trafficking screening during the initial assessment, and if needed, a child may be referred as a potential victim of trafficking.

- **Statutory changes:** The Constitutional Court and the High Court of Cassation and Justice reinforced the special statute of limitations for criminal liability for the offences of slavery, trafficking in persons, child trafficking, and pimping. In 2022, the average sentence of a convicted trafficker increased to more than 5 years, compared to an average sentence of 3 years for the same offence in 2021.

- **Victim support:** 42 hearing rooms for victims of child human trafficking have been established across the country, where multidisciplinary teams can provide them with support services.

- **Surveillance:** An online forensics system has been deployed to the National Police improve the detection of online perpetrators of child sexual abusers and pedophiles.

- **New TIP strategy:** A dynamic evaluation process of SNITP has been conducted by a team of independent experts. The process to develop the new SNITP has been initiated. It will have priorities based on opportunities and needs, clear objectives and indicators, and a realistic action plan agreed upon by all partners, including civil society.