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Strasbourg, 4 March 2025

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

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## **35th meeting of the Committee of the Parties**

Strasbourg, 29 November 2024  
Palais de l'Europe, room 10 and online

**Opening at 9:30**

## **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 35th meeting on 29 November 2024 in Strasbourg. The meeting was held in a hybrid format, with some members participating online via Zoom. An international NGO, La Strada International, attended the meeting online as an observer, in accordance with Rule 2c of the Committee's Rules of Procedure.

**Agenda item 2: Adoption of the draft agenda and draft order of business**

2. The Chair invited the Committee to adopt the draft agenda and draft order of business of the meeting. She explained that due to the fact that the Council of Europe Development Bank Governing Board meeting was being held on the same morning, and in order to enable the presence of Permanent Representatives during the election of GRETA members, the election of GRETA members (item 4) would start at 11:30.

3. The agenda and order of business, as adopted by the Committee, are set out in Appendix I. The list of participants is set out in Appendix II.

**Agenda item 3: Exchange of views with the President of GRETA**

4. 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.

5. The President of GRETA informed the Committee of GRETA's activities in the period following the previous meeting of the Committee. She indicated that GRETA had held two plenary meetings during which it had adopted eight final reports, including the first reports under the fourth evaluation round of the Convention (on Austria, Cyprus and the Slovak Republic) which would be made public in early 2025. Ms Gayer noted that GRETA had carried out four evaluation visits since September (to Bulgaria, Denmark, Georgia and Romania) and three more visits were expected to take place by the end of the year (to Malta, Montenegro and the United Kingdom). As a result, the total number of visits carried out by GRETA in 2024 would reach 13. The only visit which GRETA could not carry out was the first evaluation visit to Israel, which continued being postponed due to the situation in that country and would be included in the schedule for visits in 2025.

6. Further, Ms Gayer informed the Committee that GRETA had published a new Guidance Note on the recovery and reflection period, which is provided for in Article 13 of the Convention and is an essential step in protecting and assisting victims of trafficking. The purpose of the Guidance Note is to strengthen the implementation of the obligation to grant a recovery and reflection period to victims of trafficking and provide concrete and practical guidance for relevant authorities, agencies and civil society organisations.

7. The President of GRETA noted that there were persistent gaps in the implementation of the Convention, and that the Committee could play a greater role in supervising how recommendations are being implemented. As her mandate in GRETA was about the end, Ms Gayer thanked the Committee and in particular its Chair, Ambassador Spassova, for supporting GRETA, and all past and present GRETA members and Secretariat for their professionalism, commitment and team spirit. The full text of Ms Gayer's statement is set out in Appendix III.

8. The Chair of the Committee thanked Ms Gayer for directing the work of GRETA over the past four years, for her commitment to the fight against human trafficking and for contributing to the promotion of the Council of Europe standards. Further, the Chair welcomed that fact that GRETA had created synergies with other Council of Europe monitoring bodies and other international organisations and stated that in her capacity as Chair of GR-EXT, she ensured that information about GRETA's work was additionally spread.

#### **Agenda item 4: Election of members of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA)**

9. The Chair recalled that the terms of office of eight of the 15 members of GRETA would expire on 31 December 2024. Taking into account that no two members of GRETA may be nationals of the same State (Article 36, paragraph 3, sub-paragraph c, of the Convention), and bearing in mind the Committee's decision to restrict the participation of Belarus in the election of GRETA members, 40 Parties to the Convention<sup>1</sup> had the right to nominate candidates for GRETA membership. The remaining seven Parties<sup>2</sup> to the Convention continued to have nationals among the GRETA members whose mandates would run until the end of 2026. A matrix had been prepared by the Secretariat, providing an overview of the professional expertise and educational background of the candidates for election (document THB-CP(2024)06), and another matrix provided an overview of the professional expertise and educational background of the current GRETA members whose mandates continue for another two years (THB-CP(2024)07).

10. The Chair recalled that the deadline for submitting candidatures had been set at 29 September 2024. By that deadline, 18 States Parties (Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Ukraine) had proposed a total of 22 candidates for the election of GRETA members. Six of the candidates (proposed by Armenia, Belgium, Greece, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Sweden) had been nominated for a second term of office. Three countries had proposed more than one candidate: Denmark - three candidates (a woman and two men), Lithuania - two candidates (a woman and a man), and Romania - two candidates (both women). In accordance with Rule 10, paragraph 2, of Resolution CM/Res(2013)28 on the election procedure of members of GRETA, the Chair invited the representative of Romania to provide an explanation for submitting a single-sex list of candidates. Ms Bianca Mina, Deputy to the Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe, informed the Committee that following a national selection procedure, the two best candidates who were selected were women.

11. With a view to ensuring a multidisciplinary expertise in the new composition of GRETA, the Chair drew the Committee's attention to the professional backgrounds which were not represented amongst the seven remaining members of GRETA, namely labour inspectors, law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges with experience in human trafficking cases, professionals providing psycho-social or medical assistance to victims of human trafficking, and child protection specialists.

12. Further, the Chair recalled that Rule 11 of of Resolution CM/Res(2013)28 provided that "each Party shall ensure that the national selection procedure leading to the nomination of candidates for GRETA is in accordance with published national guidelines or otherwise transparent and designed to lead to the nomination of the most qualified candidates". Even though Parties had not been asked specifically to provide information on their national selection procedures, the Chair stressed that it was important that this rule be followed through the publication of public calls of interest and a transparent selection procedure.

#### *4.1 Assessment of whether the candidates meet the requirements for membership of GRETA (rule 2, rule 3, rule 4 and rule 9, paragraph 4, of CM/Res(2013)28)*

13. The Chair recalled the Convention requirements which should be taken into account when electing members of GRETA. They shall sit in their individual capacity, shall be independent and impartial, and shall be available to serve GRETA effectively. Candidates must have a good command of at least one of the two official languages of the Council of Europe.

<sup>1</sup> Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. Belarus did not have the right to nominate candidates following the application of rule 3.1 of the Committee's Rules of Procedure.

<sup>2</sup> Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Iceland, Republic of Moldova, North Macedonia and Portugal.

#### 4.2 *Election of eight members of GRETA*

14. The Chair referred to the explanatory note provided by the Secretariat on the steps of the election procedure (document THB-CP(2024)04) which summarised the rules for the election of GRETA members contained in Resolution CM/Res(2013)28.

15. Following an invitation from the Chair, representatives of Parties which had proposed more than one candidate indicated their preferences for particular candidates.

16. The Chair informed the Committee that equipment for electronic voting had been provided for the meeting by an external company which had been used during several previous elections and invited the representative of the company, Mr Dominique Rouillé, to introduce the equipment to members of the Committee. Following this introduction, members ran a test vote.

17. The Committee proceeded with the election of members of GRETA. After three rounds of election, some members of the Committee expressed doubts as regards the proper functioning of the remote voting devices. With a view to avoiding any doubts about the accuracy of the voting results, the Committee agreed to interrupt the voting and to start the election anew in the afternoon using the KUDO platform in the Committee of Ministers' room.

18. Following eight rounds of voting, the Committee elected the following members of GRETA for a term of office running from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2028:

- Mr Thomas AHLSTRAND (Swedish) – second term of office
- Ms Lynn CHIRCOP FAURE (Maltese) – first term of office
- Ms Dorothea CZARNECKI (German) – first term of office
- Ms Ulrike HABERL-SCHWARZ (Austrian) – first term of office
- Mr David MANCINI (Italian) – first term of office
- Ms Conny RIJKEN (Dutch) – second term of office
- Mr Peter VAN HAUWERMEIREN (Belgian) – second term of office
- Mr Georgios VANIKIOTIS (Greek) – second term of office.

19. The Committee congratulated the elected candidates and wished them success in their endeavours to monitor the implementation of the Convention.

#### **Agenda item 5: Examination of GRETA's reports on the implementation of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Aruba (first/second evaluation round), the Czech Republic and Türkiye (second evaluation round) and San Marino (third evaluation round), and adoption of recommendations in respect of these Parties**

20. The Chair recalled that since the previous Committee meeting, GRETA had adopted and published four final reports, concerning Aruba (the Netherlands), the Czech Republic, Türkiye and San Marino. The four draft recommendations based on these GRETA reports had been made available to the Committee on 4 November 2024 and members of the Committee had been invited to send any proposals for amendments by 25 November 2024. The Chair noted that the Secretariat had not received any proposals for amendments to the draft recommendations in advance of the meeting.

21. The Chair noted that the draft recommendations on the Czech Republic and Türkiye 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. The two other draft recommendations, on Aruba and San Marino, followed the model of recommendations under, respectively, the first and the third evaluation rounds, setting a two-year deadline for informing the Committee of the Parties of the measures taken.

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***Combined first and second evaluation round*****5.1 Aruba (the Netherlands)**

22. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Aruba.

23. Ms Jeannette Richardson-Baars, Director of the Coordination Centre on Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling of Aruba and National Coordinator on Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling, expressed satisfaction with the way in which GRETA had conducted the first monitoring of Aruba, engaging with the authorities throughout the preparation of the report and making the necessary amendments. She informed the Committee that certain changes had already been made since the adoption of GRETA's report, notably the duration of the recovery and reflection period had been increased to 30 days (with a possible extension of up to 90 days).

24. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Aruba and decided to request the Government of Aruba to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 29 November 2026.

***Second evaluation round*****5.2 Czech Republic**

25. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning the Czech Republic.

26. Ms Helena Klima Lišuchová, Head of International Co-operation and EU, Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic, expressed appreciation for the excellent co-operation with GRETA and the Secretariat of the Convention during the evaluation process. She noted that GRETA's report acknowledged progress made since the first evaluation round, but there were also a number of remaining challenging. She considered that some aspects of the Czech anti-trafficking system were not fully reflected in the report and expressed the hope that the next evaluation round would provide an opportunity to discuss them.

27. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of the Czech Republic and decided to request the Government of the Czech Republic to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 29 November 2025.

**5.3 Türkiye**

28. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Türkiye.

29. Mr Sencer Kağan Şenol, Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Türkiye to the Council of Europe, underlined Türkiye's ongoing efforts in combating human trafficking as well as the challenges posed by the fact that the country had hosted the highest number of refugees in the world for 11 consecutive years. He expressed the view that these efforts and challenges were not sufficiently acknowledged in GRETA's report and that there were some material errors in it. Mr Şenol affirmed Türkiye's commitment to combating human trafficking, maintaining co-operation with international partners and fulfilling its obligations under the Convention and other related international agreements. The full text of Mr Şenol's statement is set out in Appendix IV.

30. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Türkiye and decided to request the Government of Türkiye to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 29 November 2025.

### ***Third evaluation round***

#### **5.4 San Marino**

31. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning San Marino.

32. Ms Gloria Valentini, Second Secretary to the Department of Foreign Affairs of San Marino, expressed gratitude to GRETA for the professionalism and co-operation demonstrated during the third evaluation of San Marino. She noted that while San Marino had not yet identified any victims of human trafficking, the authorities paid utmost attention to the issue and a national strategy for combating trafficking, accompanied by an operational protocol, were in the process of preparation. She indicated that civil society organisations would be consulted before these documents could be adopted by the Government. Ms Valentini concluded by thanking GRETA, the Committee of the Parties and the Secretariat for their consistent efforts aimed at strengthening the implementation of the Convention.

33. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of San Marino and decided to request the Government of San Marino to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 29 November 2026.

#### **Agenda item 6: Government reports submitted in reply to Committee of the Parties recommendations**

34. 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 Government of Greece in the context of the second evaluation round of the Convention and by the Governments of Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Portugal and the United Kingdom 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.

### ***Second evaluation round***

#### **6.1 Greece**

35. Mr Ioannis Brachos, Head of the Office of the National Rapporteur for Fighting against Trafficking in Human Beings of Greece, congratulated GRETA's President on the excellent work of GRETA and expressed appreciation of the co-operation during the evaluation process. He referred to several measures taken by Greece, including the full launch of the National Referral Mechanism, amendments to the Criminal Code, the setting up of the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection and the National Emergency Response Mechanism to unaccompanied and separated children. The full text of Mr Brachos' statement is set out in Appendix V.

36. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to provide comments on the report submitted by Greece. Ms Gayer noted that significant efforts had been made by the Greek authorities to address trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation, including through the issuing of a practical guide for labour inspectors on identifying and reporting potential cases of labour exploitation and the adoption of a law regularising migrants who had been in Greece for three years before November 2023. Further, she welcomed the steps taken to combat child trafficking, through the National Emergency Response Mechanism for the Protection of Unaccompanied Children, training to front-line professionals, and the development of educational materials aimed at reducing children's vulnerability. However, Ms Gayer noted that the Greek authorities' report did not provide information with regard to the implementation of the recommendations on the recovery and reflection period, compensation to victims of trafficking, and forced returns of migrants and asylum seekers.

### ***Third evaluation round***

## **6.2 Belgium**

37. Mr Jean-François Minet, Attaché in the Organised Crime Unit of the Ministry of Justice of Belgium, thanked GRETA's President for her contribution during her mandate and the Secretariat for the organisation of a roundtable in Brussels on the implementation of the recommendations from the third evaluation round. He highlighted some of the steps taken by the Belgian authorities to implement the Committee's recommendation, including the setting up of a dedicated website and hotline on human trafficking, and increasing the funding provided to the specialised centres for victims of trafficking. Improvements had also been made to data collection by creating a unified data base. Mr Minet noted that an overall reflection was underway on how to transpose the revised EU Anti-Trafficking Directive and implement GRETA's recommendations as regards victims' access to legal aid and compensation.

38. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to provide comments on the report submitted by Belgium. Ms Gayer positively noted the steps taken in Belgium to encourage reporting of cases of trafficking, increase the resources of the National Social Security Office (which carries out work place inspections) and improve the protection of child victims of trafficking through training of magistrates and lawyers. However, she underlined that no measures had been taken to ensure trafficking victims' access to free legal aid and to revise the criteria for access to state compensation. GRETA's President remarked that creating specific rules for victims of trafficking would not be in breach of the non-discrimination principle, as argued by the Belgian authorities, and indeed many countries had adopted specific rules for victims of trafficking, considering that they are not in the same situation as other victims.

## **6.3 Bosnia and Herzegovina**

39. There were no representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina present during the discussion of the report submitted to the Committee in response to its recommendation.

40. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to provide comments on the report submitted by Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ms Gayer noted that the report of the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina addressed all the urgent recommendations made in the context of the third evaluation round. She welcomed the steps taken to improve access to legal assistance and free legal aid for victims of trafficking through the adoption of guidelines for judges and binding instructions for prosecutors, the provision of training to lawyers and the setting up of a network of specialised lawyers. As regards combating trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation, the authorities had adopted a protocol on co-operation between the police and labour inspectors as well as local action plans containing standard operating procedures and indicators of trafficking. While the report mentioned a significant increase in the funding allocated to the assistance to victims of trafficking, it appeared that no steps had been taken to develop programmes for long-term support and integration of victims of trafficking. Furthermore, despite the appointment of a dedicated working group and the preparation of draft legislation, no results had been achieved with regard to the setting up of a state compensation scheme for victims of trafficking.

## **6.4 Ireland**

41. Ms Rebecca Clarke, Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the Council of Europe, referred to the main steps taken by the Irish authorities to implement the Committee's recommendation, including the recent revision of the National Referral Mechanism and the publication of Ireland's third National Action Plan to prevent and combat Human Trafficking in November 2023. She acknowledged the role undertaken by GRETA in monitoring the implementation of the Convention in Ireland, which had been an important contribution to the development of policies and practice, and affirmed Ireland's commitment to combating human trafficking, supporting victims and prosecuting traffickers. The full text of Ms Clarke's statement is set out in Appendix VI.



42. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to provide comments on the report submitted by Ireland. Ms Gayer welcomed the adoption of Ireland's Third National Action Plan for combating human trafficking, the opening of the first specialised shelter for women victims of trafficking and the adoption of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Act 2024 which introduced, *inter alia*, a new National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for the identification and assistance of victims of trafficking. Further, the number of labour inspectors had been increased and they were being provided with training on human trafficking. Moreover, as part of the ongoing reforms of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme, non-pecuniary damages for victims and a review of the eligibility criteria for compensation were being considered. Ms Gayer highlighted some remaining areas of concern, in particular the low number of convictions for human trafficking and the related absence of compensations awarded to victims. She noted that the revised NRM was likely to lead to an increase in the number of victims requiring support, which would require additional resources.

## **6.5 Latvia**

43. Ms Jekaterina Tulina, Deputy Permanent Representative of Latvia to the Council of Europe, expressed gratitude to GRETA for the thorough assessment of Latvia's implementation of the Convention and noted that GRETA's report provided a valuable roadmap for improving national action against human trafficking. She noted that the profile of Latvia as a country of origin was changing, with an increasing number of Latvian and foreign nationals being trafficked within or to Latvia. She further stated that Latvia was paying increased attention to the identification of child victims of trafficking through the development of a screening tool. Ms Tulina expressed appreciation of GRETA's new guidance note on the recovery and reflection period, which Latvia was planning to use to make amendments to its regulatory framework and practice. The full text of Ms Tulina's statement is set out in Appendix VII.

44. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to provide comments on the report submitted by Latvia. Ms Gayer welcomed the progress made in implementing the recommendations from the third evaluation round, including the increase in the maximum amount of state compensation for victims of trafficking and the considerable rise in the number of victims awarded compensation. She also commended the training provided to judges on victim compensation, as well as the increased funding for social rehabilitation services for trafficking victims. However, state support for victims remains limited to six months, and no progress had been made in ending the detention of unaccompanied and separated children for immigration purposes.

## **6.6 Luxembourg**

45. Mr Dylan Siry, Chargé de mission, Permanent Representation of Luxembourg to the Council of Europe, thanked GRETA for the excellent co-operation with the Luxembourg authorities. He stated that Luxembourg had taken good note of the recommendations and that in addition to the actions already taken, the authorities were committed to putting into place further actions related to the identification of victims, the provision of assistance to them and the prosecution of traffickers. He also highlighted the ongoing work on drafting a second national action plan on combating trafficking. The full text of Mr Siry's statement is set out in Appendix VIII.

46. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to provide comments on the report submitted by Luxembourg. Ms Gayer welcomed the steps taken to implement many of the recommendations made during the third evaluation, including legislative changes and the setting up of a bureau for managing seized and confiscated assets. Additional legislative changes were underway as part of the reform of youth protection and juvenile justice. However, Ms Gayer noted that victim assistance continued to depend on the initiation of criminal proceedings and that the number of cases where compensation had been granted to victims of trafficking remained low.

## 6.7 Portugal

47. Mr Manuel Albano, National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings of Portugal, thanked GRETA and the Secretariat for their work and support, and highlighted Portugal's commitment to the implementation of the Convention. He referred to the recent adoption of Portugal's fifth National Action Plan, which reflected GRETA's third report recommendations, and reaffirmed Portugal's strong commitment to combating human trafficking as a serious human rights violation. The full text of Mr Albano's statement is set out in Appendix IX.

48. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to provide comments on the report submitted by Portugal. Ms Gayer welcomed the steps taken to implement the recommendation made as part of the third evaluation round, in particular the issuing of a directive instructing prosecutors to prioritise compensation claims for vulnerable victims and to file compensation claims on behalf of victims, as well as legislative changes enabling victims of trafficking to be issued with a residence permit when their personal circumstances so require. However, Ms Gayer expressed concern about the lack of changes to the criteria for granting state compensation. Moreover, no legislative changes had taken place, and no guidance had been issued on the non-punishment provision. Further, no developments were reported as regards the recommendations to set up procedures for the identification of victims of trafficking among applicants for international protection and to provide training and guidance to staff working at immigration detention facilities and asylum accommodation centres.

## 6.8 United Kingdom

49. Ms Simranjeet Aujla, Policy Adviser in the Modern Slavery Unit of the United Kingdom Home Office, apologised for the delay in submitting the UK report on the implementation of the Committee's third round recommendation. She stressed that the UK Government was committed to reforming the system for tackling modern slavery and referred to the possible adoption of the new criminal offence of criminal exploitation of children. Further, she noted that a legislative process was underway to set up a Fair Work Agency and streamline law enforcement capabilities in the area of labour exploitation. Ms Aujla also stated that 200 additional decision-making staff would be hired to address the backlog of cases in the National Referral Mechanism. Moreover, she noted that the migration partnership with Rwanda had been revoked.

50. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to provide comments on the report submitted by the United Kingdom. Ms Gayer welcomed the decision to provide additional £10 million funding for a further 200 decision-making staff, as well as to end the migration partnership with Rwanda. Further, she noted that the interim report referred to steps taken to implement the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *VCL and AN v. United Kingdom*. Despite these improvements, Ms Gayer referred to several remaining issues of concern. In particular, there had been no changes to the legal aid system and no action had been taken to improve access to compensation for victims. Moreover, no action was reported in relation to the recommendation to review the victim return and repatriation policies, including carrying out pre-removal risk and security assessments for vulnerable victims.

### **Agenda item 7: Exchange of views on the monitoring system of the Convention and ways to strengthen it**

51. The Chair recalled that at its previous meeting, the Committee had held an exchange of views on the introduction of a possible procedure for supervising the implementation of the Committee's recommendations by State Parties and had tasked the Secretariat to prepare a reflection document with a view to continuing the discussion at the present meeting.

52. The Chair invited the Executive Secretary to present document THB-CP(2024)03 entitled "Reflection paper on the monitoring system of the Convention and ways to strengthen it". The Executive Secretary explained that the document dealt with three issues: the monitoring/reporting system under the Convention, the role of the Committee of the Parties in supervising the implementation of the recommendations made to

States Parties, and the rules on the election of GRETA members. The document detailed the process of GRETA's monitoring work, highlighting the ongoing dialogue between GRETA and States Parties and the attention paid to the specific national context while applying the same benchmarks. The Executive Secretary noted that there were gaps in the implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Committee of the Parties on the basis of GRETA's reports, which is why the Committee had repeatedly contemplated on how to ensure proper follow-up of GRETA's findings. The launch of the fourth evaluation round of the Convention provided a good opportunity to put in place a supervision procedure by the Committee of the Parties which would enhance its involvement in ensuring the proper implementation of the Convention. The Executive Secretary emphasised that the proposed supervision procedure, presented in document THB-CP(2024)02 "Proposal for a procedure for supervising the implementation of Committee of the Parties' recommendations", should not create too much additional workload for the national authorities, but would require an amendment to the Committee of the Parties' Rules of Procedure. As regards the Rules on the election procedure of GRETA members, since their adoption by the Committee of Ministers in 2008, they had been revised once, in 2013. The document detailed the changes previously made and noted that changing again the rules on the election of GRETA members, in particular as regards their language competences, should be done in harmony with other monitoring bodies. Finally, the document noted that while the Committee of the Parties could set up a working group based on rule 14 of its Rules of procedure, there was no possibility to set up a joint working group between GRETA and the Committee pursuant to their respective rules of procedure and taking into account the separation of the roles of the two pillars of the monitoring mechanism of the Convention.

53. The Chair opened the floor to members of the Committee for comments or questions on the proposed procedure for supervising the implementation of the Committee of the Parties' recommendations.

54. Ambassador Andreu Jordi, Permanent Representative of Andorra to the Council of Europe, reiterated some of the points made by his predecessor, Ambassador Joan Forner Rovira, at the previous Committee meeting, namely that GRETA reports should take into account the specific situation of small countries which have not had human trafficking cases and not make unnecessary recommendations. He supported the proposal to set up a working group which looks both into the monitoring system of the Convention and the election of GRETA members.

55. Ambassador Gabriel Revel, Permanent Representative of Monaco to the Council of Europe, supported the proposal of Andorra to set up a working group, noting that good command of both official languages of the Council of Europe should become a requirement for the election of GRETA members. He also expressed support for the introduction of a supervision procedure by the Committee of the Parties.

56. Ms Sophie Heegaard-Schroeter, Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the Council of Europe, reiterated the view taken by the representative of Switzerland at the previous meeting that a possible new supervision procedure should first be discussed by a working group. She also supported the proposal to include a provision in the rules on the election procedure (Rule 13) which gives priority to experts who speak the language which is under-represented amongst GRETA members.

57. Ambassador Svetlana Geleva, Permanent Representative of North Macedonia to the Council of Europe, supported the proposal of Andorra and expressed the view that the Committee was not ready to take a decision on the adoption of a new supervision procedure.

58. Ms Lea Cornu, Deputy to the Permanent Representative of France to the Council of Europe, stated that the existing monitoring procedure was sufficient and that introducing a new procedure risked putting an additional administrative burden. She also spoke in favour of introducing a rule which would ensure the presence of French-speaking members in GRETA and replicating it in the election procedure rules of GREVIO.

59. Mr Florian Wehner, Policy Officer at the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth of Germany, expressed concerns about adding a language criterion to the rules on the election procedure, fearing it might complicate the election process, and underlined that expertise in the area of combating human trafficking should be the most important requirement.

60. Mr Carlos Oliveira, Deputy Permanent Representative of Portugal to the Council of Europe, supported the proposal of Andorra and stressed that GRETA reports should be adapted to the country situation. Further, he noted that the implications of the proposal to change the language requirements for GRETA members should be further analysed.

61. Ms Helena Klima Liščuková, Head of International Co-operation and EU, Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic, spoke in favour of the introduction of a supervision procedure by the Committee of the Parties, similar to what already exists under the Istanbul Convention. She however highlighted the difference between the Committee of the Parties to the Anti-Trafficking Convention and the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention, the latter being composed of national experts who are in charge of ensuring the follow-up of the recommendations in their countries.

62. Ms Marjatta Hiekka, Legal Counsellor at the Unit for Human Rights Courts and Conventions of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, stressed the importance of respecting the independence of monitoring bodies such as GRETA and noted that the professional expertise of candidates for GRETA in the area of combating human trafficking should remain the primary criteria. She also expressed the view that decisions about the introduction of a supervision procedure could be made on the basis of the reflection paper prepared by the Secretariat, without the need to create a working group.

63. Mr Jean-François Minet, Attaché in the Organised Crime Unit of the Ministry of Justice of Belgium, thanked GRETA's President, expressed support for the proposal made in the reflection paper, but underlined that the points made by other delegations during the meeting should be taken into account. He was of the view that a pragmatic solution should be found to the issue of language competences of GRETA members.

64. Ms Miroslava Fialová from the Information Centre for Combating Human Trafficking of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic expressed support for the setting up of a working group.

65. Ms Brunilda Koço, Deputy Permanent Representative of Albania to the Council of Europe, supported the proposal of Andorra and proposed that the consideration of agenda item 7 be postponed to the next meeting.

66. The Chair invited GRETA's President to comment on the different points raised by members of the Committee. Ms Gayer underlined that GRETA was constantly discussing and updating its working methods, including when it comes to the evaluation of small countries, and that its recommendations were tailored to the national context. On the issue of language competences of GRETA members, she noted that most countries did not have English or French as an official language and therefore GRETA worked with interpreters. Further, she stressed that when composing a GRETA delegation for a country visit, it was essential to have a common language within the delegation.

67. The Chair concluded that as many States Parties had not participated in the discussion of this agenda item, there was no consensus on how to proceed. She proposed to organise informal consultations before the next Committee of the Parties meeting on the different issues raised by members of the Committee and to consult DLAPIL on possible changes to the rules. The Committee agreed to hold informal consultations before continuing the discussion of this agenda item at its next meeting.

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

68. The Chair gave the floor to the Executive Secretary to update the Committee on activities organised to strengthen the implementation of GRETA's conclusions and the Committee of the Parties' recommendations. The Executive Secretary informed the Committee of the organisation of round-table meetings in Belgium, Ireland and Luxembourg to discuss progress in the implementation of the third-round recommendations, as well as the forthcoming holding of such a round-table meeting in Slovenia. She also referred to the anti-trafficking co-operation projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Malta, North Macedonia and

Serbia, highlighting the support provided to Malta in the adoption of a new national strategy for combating human trafficking. Further, she informed the Committee that a meeting of the network of lawyers specialised to provide assistance to victims of trafficking had taken place on 17-18 October 2024.

### **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**

69. The Chair gave the floor to the Executive Secretary to provide relevant information. In the interest of time, the Executive Secretary limited her intervention to three points. First, she informed the Committee that the revised EU Directive on combating trafficking in human beings had entered into force on 14 July 2024 and EU Member States had two years to transpose the new rules into their national law. The revised Directive added several forms of exploitation to the definition of human trafficking, namely the exploitation of surrogacy, forced marriage and illegal adoption. Second, the Executive Secretary referred to the work of the OSCE in the area of combating human trafficking and the synergies with the Council of Europe, in particular the organisation of a joint meeting of national anti-trafficking coordinators and rapporteurs on 12-13 September in Vienna. Third, the Executive Secretary informed the Committee that the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) would organise a meeting of the principals of the organisations members of ICAT on 13 December 2024, during which a joint statement would be issued calling for action to prevent and end trafficking in children.

### **Agenda item 10: State of signatures and ratifications of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings**

70. The Chair noted that no new signatures and/or ratifications had been submitted since the last meeting of the Committee (21 June 2024).

### **Agenda item 11: Dates of future meetings**

71. The Committee decided to hold its next meeting on 20 June 2025.

### **Agenda item 12: Other business**

72. No interventions were made on this agenda item.

### **Agenda item 13: Adoption of the list of decisions taken**

73. The Committee approved the decisions taken at the meeting, namely:

- Adoption of recommendations concerning Aruba, the Czech Republic, Türkiye and San Marino;
- Election of eight members of GRETA;
- Continuation of the discussion on the monitoring system of the Convention and ways to strengthen it at the next meeting of the Committee.

## Appendix I

### Agenda

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the draft agenda and draft order of business
3. Exchange of views with the President of GRETA
4. Election of members of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA)
  - 4.1 Assessment of whether the candidates meet the requirements for membership of GRETA (rule 2, rule 3, rule 4 and rule 9, paragraph 4, of CM/Res(2013)28)
  - 4.2 Election of eight members of GRETA
5. Examination of GRETA's reports on the implementation of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Aruba (first/second evaluation round), the Czech Republic and Türkiye (second evaluation round) and San Marino (third evaluation round), and adoption of recommendations in respect of these Parties

#### *First/Second evaluation round*

- 5.1 Aruba

#### *Second evaluation round*

- 5.2 Czech Republic
- 5.3 Türkiye

#### *Third evaluation round*

- 5.4 San Marino

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

#### *Second evaluation round*

- 6.1 Greece

#### *Third evaluation round*

- 6.2 Belgium
- 6.3 Bosnia and Herzegovina
- 6.4 Ireland
- 6.5 Latvia
- 6.6 Luxembourg
- 6.7 Portugal
- 6.8 United Kingdom

7. Exchange of views on the monitoring system of the Convention and ways to strengthen it

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. State of signatures and ratifications of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
11. Dates of future meetings
12. Other business
13. Adoption of the list of decisions taken

## **Order of business**

### **09.30 – 11.00**

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the draft agenda and draft order of business
3. Exchange of views with the President of GRETA
5. Examination of GRETA's reports on the implementation of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Aruba (first/second evaluation round), the Czech Republic and Türkiye (second evaluation round) and San Marino (third evaluation round), and adoption of recommendations in respect of these Parties

#### *Second evaluation round*

5.2 Czech Republic

5.3 Türkiye

#### *Third evaluation round*

5.4 San Marino

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

#### *Second evaluation round*

6.1 Greece

#### *Third evaluation round*

6.2 Belgium

6.3 Bosnia and Herzegovina

6.4 Ireland

6.5 Latvia

6.6 Luxembourg

6.7 Portugal

6.8 United Kingdom

If time allows, the following two items will also be taken before the coffee break:

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

**11.00 – 11.30 Coffee break**

**11.30 – 13.00**

**4. Election of members of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA)**

- 4.1 *Assessment of whether the candidates meet the requirements for membership of GRETA (rule 2, rule 3, rule 4 and rule 9, paragraph 4, of CM/Res(2013)28)*
- 4.2 *Election of eight members of GRETA*

**13.00 – 14.30 Lunch break**

**14.30 -**

5. Examination of GRETA's reports on the implementation of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Aruba (first/second evaluation round), the Czech Republic and Türkiye (second evaluation round) and San Marino (third evaluation round), and adoption of recommendations in respect of these Parties

*First/Second evaluation round*

- 5.1 Aruba

7. Exchange of views on the monitoring system of the Convention and ways to strengthen it

*Items 8 and 9, if not taken before the lunch break*

10. State of signatures and ratifications of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
11. Dates of future meetings
12. Other business
13. Adoption of the list of decisions taken



## Appendix II

### List of participants

#### Members of the Committee of the Parties Membres du Comité des Parties

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to the Council of Europe

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Mme Olimpia Torres Barros  
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Mme Eva Garcia Lluelles (*online / en ligne*)  
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Mme Marta Villagrasa Noguera (*online / en ligne*)  
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International Monitoring Bodies  
Department of Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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Mr Wolfgang Spadinger  
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Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs

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Ms Elza Alizada  
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Participants du Comité des Parties**

**COUNCIL OF EUROPE BODIES /  
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***COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS***

Mr Michael O' Flaherty  
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**Observers of the Committee of the Parties  
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International Coordinator

**Others / Autres**

**GROUP OF EXPERTS ON ACTION AGAINST  
TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS /  
GROUPE D'EXPERTS SUR LA LUTTE CONTRE LA  
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Ms Helga Gayer  
President of GRETA

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Direction générale de la démocratie et de la dignité humaine***

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***Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe / Secrétariat de l'Assemblée parlementaire du Conseil de l'Europe***

Ms Marie Martin  
Co-ordinator of the Subcommittee on Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Being of PACE Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons

***Secretariat of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities / Secrétariat du Congrès des pouvoirs locaux et régionaux***

Ms Maren Lambrecht-Feigl  
Secretary of the Committee on Social Inclusion and Human Dignity

### **Interpreters / Interprètes**

Ms Katia di Stefano  
Ms Remy Jain  
Ms Morgane Lamothe

## Appendix III

### Statement by Ms Helga GAYER, President of GRETA

Madam Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to participate in the 35th meeting of the Committee of the Parties for the periodic exchange between the Committee and GRETA's President, which is an opportunity to update you on GRETA's activities.

Since your last meeting in June, GRETA has held two **plenary meetings**. At its 51st meeting in July, GRETA adopted **final reports** concerning Aruba (combined first and second evaluation rounds), Czechia and Türkiye (second round), and San Marino (third round), which are the subject of recommendations by the Committee of the Parties to be adopted at today's meeting. At its 52nd meeting, which took place last week, GRETA adopted the first three **final reports** under the fourth evaluation round of the Convention, on Austria, Cyprus and Slovak Republic, as well as a report on Liechtenstein as part of third evaluation round. These final reports will be sent to the authorities concerned and will be made public in early 2025, together with the final comments received from the authorities. Furthermore, at its last meeting, GRETA approved the **draft reports** on Albania, Croatia and the Republic of Moldova, as part of the fourth evaluation round, as well as the draft third round report on Ukraine.

Since the last meeting of the Committee of the Parties, GRETA has carried out four **evaluation visits** (to Bulgaria, Denmark, Georgia and Romania), and before the end of the year, it will carry out three more visits (to Malta, Montenegro and the United Kingdom). As a result, the total number of visits carried out by GRETA in 2024 will reach 13. The only visit which GRETA could not carry out this year was the first evaluation visit to Israel, which continues being postponed since last autumn and will be included in the schedule for visits in 2025.

After the delay caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, GRETA is now back on track with its country evaluation schedule, due to the increased annual number of evaluations carried out in the last three years (namely, 13 visits per year, compared to 10 or 11 before the pandemic). At each plenary session, GRETA is discussing eight to nine country evaluation reports. Sustaining this intensive volume of evaluations depends on the availability of adequate human resources in the Secretariat.

GRETA also adopted and published in September a new **Guidance note on the recovery and reflection period**, which is provided for in Article 13 of the Convention and is an essential step in protecting and assisting victims of trafficking. The purpose of the Guidance Note is to strengthen the implementation of the obligation to grant a recovery and reflection period to victims of trafficking and provide concrete and practical guidance for relevant authorities, agencies and civil society organisations. It highlights the purposes and principles of the recovery and reflection period, the legal basis and procedures for granting it, and its relationship with other provisions of the Convention.

Even though GRETA has been in existence for 15 years, it continues to periodically discuss and adjust its **working methods** and internal procedures. While the provisions of the Convention are the same for all State Parties, GRETA always pays attention to the specific national context. For example, at its plenary meeting last week, GRETA adopted a draft report on Ukraine which takes into account the immense challenges created by the war. The adoption of the first three reports under the fourth evaluation round was an opportunity to make some changes to the structure and content of the reports.

While it is clear that State Parties have made efforts to comply with the CoE Anti-Trafficking Convention, there are also **persistent gaps and new challenges**. In some cases, GRETA is repeating in its fourth-round reports recommendations which were made already during the first round. The challenge that we are facing is how strengthen compliance with the recommendations. GRETA's conclusions made as a result of country monitoring are reinforced by the recommendations issued by the political pillar of the monitoring



mechanism under the Convention, the Committee of the Parties. I believe that the Committee could play a greater role in supervising how its recommendations are being implemented. It is important that the two pillars of the Convention's mechanism continue to speak with one voice. It is also of crucial importance that the Council of Europe continues assisting member States in implementing GRETA's recommendations through targeted co-operation activities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The fight against human trafficking cuts across many of the areas of work of the Council of Europe and is a truly **transversal issue**. With a view to strengthening the impact of its work, GRETA has been building synergies with other Council of Europe bodies, including GREVIO, the Lanzarote Committee, Moneyval, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM), and the SG Special Representative on migration and refugees.

Twenty years after the Council of Europe adopted its Anti-Trafficking Convention, there are many advances in the fight against human trafficking, but also many remaining and new challenges. Criminals adapt and use new forms of exploitation. The increasing use of **information and communication technology** to commit human trafficking will continue posing challenges, which is why it is important to continue investing in capacity building, international co-operation and co-operation with private companies. Irregular migration, which is often the result of armed conflict, violence and humanitarian emergencies, is a major vulnerability factor, making migrants an easy prey for unscrupulous criminals. The **restrictive immigration policies** pursued by a growing number of countries, insufficient channels for regular migration and family reunification, as well as lack of access to the labour market for asylum seekers, create risks of trafficking and exploitation. Another problem observed in some countries relates to **restrictive policies or legislation regulating the activities and funding of NGOs** which impede their ability to engage in preventing human trafficking, as well as detecting and assisting victims of trafficking.

GRETA's monitoring of the implementation of the Anti-Trafficking Convention contributes to preventing violations of the European Convention on Human Rights. Following a strategic approach, GRETA has made several **third-party submissions** to the European Court of Human Rights, including in the case *T.V. v. Spain* where the Court established a violation of Article 4 of ECHR due to failure to conduct an effective investigation into credible allegations of human trafficking.

**Co-operation and partnerships** are indispensable prerequisites for successful international action against trafficking in human beings and GRETA has continued to reinforce its working relations with other international organisations. By way of example, we organise together with the Office of the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings annual meetings of National Anti-trafficking Co-ordinators and Rapporteurs. The last such meeting, which took place in September, involved participants from 60 countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is the last meeting of the Committee of the Parties which I attend in my role as President of GRETA – a role that I have had the privilege to perform for four out of the eight years that I spent as a member of GRETA. These eight years have been challenging on many accounts, including the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. At the same time, I feel a sense of pride and accomplishment because of the many examples of positive change brought about by GRETA's work. I am grateful to all the past and present GRETA colleagues and Secretariat members for the professionalism, commitment and team spirit that they have demonstrated.

The terms of office of eight GRETA members will expire at the end of this year, but six of them are standing for a second term of office. I would like to underline the benefits of ensuring a degree of continuity in GRETA's membership. An effective monitoring system relies on the professionalism, availability, dedication and independence of the experts to whom the task is entrusted.

I am grateful to the Committee of the Parties, to all its members and particularly to the Chair, Ambassador Spassova, for supporting GRETA. I trust that the Committee will continue reinforcing GRETA's monitoring findings through its work and support to States Parties in improving the implementation of the Convention.

I thank you for your attention and look forward to answering any questions that you may have.

## **Appendix IV**

### **Statement made by Mr Sencer Kağan Şenol, Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Türkiye to the Council of Europe**

- We have carefully examined the report and the recommendations regarding the 2nd round of evaluation carried out within the frame of the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings.
- Delegations who are interested in may also see our government responses provided by the end of the 2nd Evaluation Report of Türkiye.
- According to the data provided by the UNHCR, Türkiye has been hosting the highest number of refugees for 11 consecutive years within its border.
- We would have expected the report to touch upon this fact and stress challenges related to this fact. Rather, we understand that the report has a perspective that Türkiye is a transit country.
- The report also seems to have material errors, which are addressed in my authorities' response.
- I would like to take the opportunity to stress once again that Türkiye will remain committed to its combat against human trafficking and continue cooperating with various international partners on this very critical issue.
- This delegation will also remain ready to cooperate with the Secretariat for clarifying any point, as it always has been the case.
- Türkiye's accomplishments in this field are obvious and progressing ever since, despite the humanitarian burden we have been graciously carrying for decades.
- These efforts could have been shed light upon in the report.
- Türkiye will continue to honour its obligations under the Convention and other related international agreements.

## Appendix V

### Statement made by Mr Ioannis Brachos, Head of the Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings of Greece

Distinguished Chair, dear members of the Committee,

I would like to thank GRETA, on behalf of Greece, for their cooperation and for the conclusions they formulated during the second round of Greece's evaluation.

The visit by the GRETA delegation was a great chance to pinpoint the success and the deficiencies in the fight against human trafficking in Greece.

In accordance with the Committee of the Parties recommendations, Greece has increased its efforts to prevent and combat human trafficking by putting important legal and institutional tools in place.

- **Greece has consistently stepped-up efforts towards preventing and combating of the heinous crime of trafficking in human beings**, through the introduction of pivotal legal and institutional instruments.
- The official launch and full operation of the **National Referral Mechanism (NRM)** for the identification and referral of victims of THB, in January 2019, under the supervision/coordination of Office of the National Rapporteur (ONR).
- **The amendments of the Greek Penal Code in July 2019 and November 2021** significantly improved the legislative frame by adding new forms of exploitation, thus covering more than the minimum forms in the existing international, regional, and European instruments.
- Furthermore, Greece has taken concrete measures to **protect children and unaccompanied minors** from THB victimization, with the establishment of the **General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection** of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum and the **National Emergency Response Mechanism (NERM)** as a safety net offering protection to the unaccompanied minors.
- The ONR follows a pro-active approach to the **early identification** of presumed THB victims, especially women and children. A series of training programs on THB indicators and victim protection **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** have taken place involving a wide range of beneficiaries from law enforcement authorities to Reception and Identification Centers (RICs) throughout Greece.
- The **Labour Inspectorate**, as an independent Authority, is strengthening its ties with the Hellenic Police, the Office of National Rapporteur, the National Referral Mechanism and the social partners for the protection of victims of human trafficking.
- Summing up, I have to reiterate that Greece is continuously upgrading its efforts for consolidating a holistic approach in combating effectively THB in all of its forms at institutional, legislative and practical level and remains committed to continue the dialogue and fruitful cooperation with GRETA in compliance with the Committee of the Parties' recommendations to achieve higher standards in preventing and combating trafficking in human beings.

Thank you for your attention.

## **Appendix VI**

### **Statement made by Ms Rebecca Clarke, Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the Council of Europe**

- Ireland would like to thank GRETA for providing us with an opportunity to submit our Response to their Recommendation, issued in September 2022.
- GRETA provided a number of recommendations to guide Irish authorities in our provision of a comprehensive and robust response to human trafficking, and to ensure victims' access to justice and effective remedies.
- The Irish Government remains dedicated to addressing human trafficking, supporting its victims and prosecuting traffickers. Significant efforts have been made to comply with GRETA guidance, resulting in meaningful progress and successful outcomes in this area.
- A significant milestone in the Irish context has been the recent revision of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and its widening to include 'trusted partners' as authorised referral partners. This will allow more victims of trafficking to come forward and receive the supports they require, and will in turn allow for more investigations and files being prepared for the Director of Public Prosecutions to prosecute.
- Other positive developments include the publication Ireland's third National Action Plan to prevent and combat Human Trafficking in November 2023, which incorporates and demonstrates Ireland's increased knowledge, and increased understanding of the complexities involved in trafficking in human beings.
- We wish to acknowledge the role undertaken by GRETA in monitoring the implementation of the Convention in Ireland, which has been an important contribution in the development of our policies and practices to combat this most heinous human rights abuse. We will continue to give careful consideration to GRETA's recommendations into the future.

## **Appendix VII**

### **Statement made by Ms Jekaterina Tulina, Deputy Permanent Representative of Latvia to the Council of Europe**

- Latvia would like to thank GRETA for its thorough assessment in the report it prepared.
- Latvia is currently going through a transitional period from a country of origin to the country where its own nationals and third-country nationals are exposed to trafficking in human beings. Such trends generally create many new and unprecedented challenges for policy planners and practitioners.
- The work of victim-oriented law enforcement agencies plays a very important role in fostering greater victim trust. A victim-centred approach is greatly contributed by development of specializations on trafficking in human which is beings ensured by the State Police and partly also by the Prosecutor's Office.
- Since the last round of evaluation, attention has been paid to the identification of minors as victims of trafficking. The Ministry of Welfare launched a special project on the creation of a Screening tool aiming at identification of these victims in a timely manner.
- In conclusion, we would like to thank GRETA for the explanation published in 2024 for granting a recovery and reflection period in accordance with Article 13 of the Convention. The prepared material is important for Latvia to make appropriate amendments to the regulatory framework and strengthen the systematic implementation of practice.

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## **Appendix VIII**

### **Statement made by Mr Dylan Siry, Chargé de mission, Permanent Representation of Luxembourg to the Council of Europe**

Thank you, Chair.

I will keep our comments brief.

Luxembourg would like to thank GRETA for the excellent cooperation between the Committee and our authorities.

The government of Luxembourg provided written comments under its third evaluation round on 22 November 2024.

I can confirm that Luxembourg has taken good note of the recommendations communicated by GRETA under this evaluation round.

In addition to the actions already taken, my authorities remain dedicated to putting in place further actions as necessary in the detection and prosecution of trafficking and the support to victims thereof.

Further to the points raised in our written communication, I would like to highlight in particular the work of our authorities as relates to the drafting a second national action plan on the prevention of trafficking.

Luxembourg is committed to continuing its work in relation to the prevention of trafficking in a cooperative and steadfast manner.

We will continue to take due note of the recommendations of GRETA in future.

Thank you, Chair.

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## **Appendix IX**

### **Statement made by Mr Manuel Albano, National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings of Portugal**

Dear President, Dear Executive Secretary,

First of all, thank you for the work carried out by GRETA and all your support provided to Portugal, as well as recognition for the work carried out.

Portugal is committed, with the Council of Europe Convention, as well as with GRETA, in implementing its provisions and GRETA recommendations, to develop best practices in Prevention, Punishment, Protection and Partnerships to combat Human Trafficking Humans and protect their victims.

A new National Plan to Combat and Prevent Trafficking in Human Beings was approved this week by the Council of Ministers, and is now under public consultation, and it will come into force in 2025, with a period of 3 years, until 2027.

Let me reaffirm that Portugal is fully committed to GRETA, in this common fight and in the uncompromising defense of Human Rights.