



Strasbourg, 23 September 2025

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

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36th meeting of the Committee of the Parties

Strasbourg, 20 June 2025  
Palais de l'Europe, room 11, and online

Opening at 09:30

## 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 36th meeting on 20 June 2025 in Strasbourg. The meeting was held in a hybrid format, with some members participating online via Zoom.

#### Agenda item 2: Adoption of the draft agenda

2. The Chair invited the Committee to adopt the draft agenda of the meeting.

3. 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: State of signatures and ratifications of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

4. The Chair noted that no new signatures and/or ratifications had been submitted since the last meeting of the Committee (29 November 2024).

#### Agenda item 4: Exchange of views with the President of GRETA

5. The Chair invited Ms Conny Rijken, 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.

6. Ms Rijken recalled that she had been elected as President of GRETA in March, and stressed that she looked forward to fulfilling this role and contributing through her experience as the Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children and Professor of Human Trafficking and Globalisation at Tilburg University.

7. GRETA's President informed the Committee that since its last meeting on 28 November 2024, GRETA had held one plenary meeting, in March 2025, during which it had adopted final reports concerning Albania, Croatia and the Republic of Moldova (under the 4th evaluation round of monitoring the implementation of the Convention) and Ukraine (under the 3rd evaluation round). Moreover, GRETA had published four reports adopted at its preceding meeting, concerning Austria, Cyprus, the Slovak Republic and Liechtenstein.

8. Ms Rijken also referred to GRETA's 14th general report, covering the year 2024, which summarised the results of 15 years of monitoring of the implementation of the Convention and highlighted new challenges. She noted that a number of Council of Europe member states were experiencing a shift in their human trafficking profile, turning from being primarily countries of origin of victims exploited abroad into countries of destination for foreign victims. This shift required changes in law, to ensure better protection of labour and social rights of migrant workers, as well as strategic policy planning and implementation of measures in multiple areas. Another trend was the increase in cases of human trafficking for the purpose of forced criminality, which ranked third in the number of victims detected globally, but was often underrepresented in the statistics, highlighting the need for changes in national legislation and data collection, prioritisation in law enforcement efforts, consistent application of the non-punishment principle, as well as more research. Further, traffickers increasingly used the internet in the recruitment of victims via advertisements and gaming sites, as well as social media to groom young people to both engage and recruit others. In this connection, GRETA's President welcomed the organisation of the high-level conference “Empowering Change: Technology and Artificial Intelligence in the Fight against Human Trafficking”, under the Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, on 11 June in Rabat, Malta.

9. Recalling the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (in May 2005 in Warsaw), GRETA's President noted that its comprehensive provisions had translated into real progress in national legislation, policies and practice. She stressed that the independent and systematic monitoring undertaken by GRETA had triggered many positive changes, resulting in greater protection of the rights of victims of human trafficking.

10. Finally, Ms Rijken informed the Committee of the forthcoming annual meeting of national anti-trafficking coordinators and rapporteurs, co-organised with the OSCE for the eighth consecutive year, which would take place on 11-12 September in Strasbourg and focus on conflict-related trafficking in human beings, the links between human trafficking and drugs/forced criminality, and engagement with the private sector in combating human trafficking. The full text of Ms Rijken's statement is set out in Appendix III.

11. The Chair thanked Ms Rijken for her observations and opened the floor for questions or comments concerning GRETA's work.

12. Ms Roxana Maracineanu, General Secretary of MIPROF, France, congratulated Ms Rijken on her election as GRETA's President. Referring to GRETA's fourth visit to France which had started earlier in the week, she welcomed the efforts of GRETA's rapporteurs and Secretariat to visit also some of France's overseas territories. Ms Maracineanu noted that a training on human trafficking had just been organised by MIPROF for relevant professionals in the region of Grand-Est.

Agenda item 5: Examination of GRETA's reports on the implementation of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Liechtenstein and Ukraine (third evaluation round) and by Albania, Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Republic of Moldova and the Slovak Republic (fourth evaluation round) and adoption of recommendations in respect of these Parties

13. The Chair recalled that since the previous Committee meeting, GRETA had adopted and published eight final reports, concerning Liechtenstein and Ukraine under the third evaluation round, as well as the first six reports under the fourth evaluation round of the Convention, concerning Albania, Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Republic of Moldova and the Slovak Republic. The eight draft recommendations based on these GRETA reports had been made available to the Committee on 23 May 2025 and members of the Committee had been invited to send any proposals for amendments by 16 June 2025. The Chair noted that the Secretariat had not received any proposals for amendments to the draft recommendations in advance of the meeting.

14. The Chair noted that the draft recommendations on Liechtenstein and Ukraine 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. The other six draft recommendations, under the fourth evaluation round, on Albania, Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Republic of Moldova and the Slovak Republic, were similar in structure to those issued by the Committee under the previous evaluation round, setting a two-year deadline for informing the Committee of the Parties of the measures taken, with one notable difference: a new paragraph "B" has been included which draws attention to the recommendations that have been made repeatedly under the preceding rounds, and should therefore be implemented as a matter of priority.

### *Third evaluation round*

#### 5.1 Liechtenstein

15. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Liechtenstein.

16. Mr Claudio Nardi, from the Division for Economic Affairs and Development of the Liechtenstein Office for Foreign Affairs, expressed appreciation of the open dialogue and mutual engagement that had marked the process of the third evaluation of Liechtenstein by GRETA. He noted that some of the recommendations made in GRETA's report had already had a positive effect on Liechtenstein, and the national roundtable for combating human trafficking had invited Liechtenstein's National Human Rights Institution to its next

meeting. Further, Mr Nardi highlighted Liechtenstein's international engagement through the Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking (FAST) initiative and affirmed his country's commitment to continue working actively to combat human trafficking. The full text of Mr Nardi's statement is set out in Appendix IV.

17. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Liechtenstein and decided to request the Government of Liechtenstein to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 20 June 2027.

## 5.2 Ukraine

18. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Ukraine.

19. Ms Iryna Postolovska, Deputy Minister of Social Policy for European Integration of Ukraine, expressed her gratitude to GRETA for the organisation of the visit to Ukraine in May 2024 and the report published subsequently, providing valuable support and recommendations. She informed the Committee that the number of persons granted the status of victims of trafficking in 2024 was 182, and in the first five months of 2025, 109 (of whom 5% were children). The patterns of exploitation were rapidly changing, with an increase in cases of forced recruitment in armed conflict, sexual exploitation and exploitation in pornography. A new national anti-trafficking programme was in preparation and discussions on the establishment of an independent national anti-trafficking rapporteur were underway. In conclusion, Ms Postolovska affirmed Ukraine's commitment to continuing combating trafficking in human beings, with the support of the Council of Europe.

20. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Ukraine and decided to request the Government of Ukraine to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 20 June 2027.

### *Fourth evaluation round*

## 5.3 Albania

21. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Albania.

22. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Albania and decided to request the Government of Albania to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 20 June 2027.

## 5.4 Austria

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

24. Mr Nikolaus Sattler, from the Unit for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Border Issues and Appeal Procedures of the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs of Austria, congratulated Ms Rijken on her election as GRETA's President and affirmed that combating human trafficking remains a priority for the new federal government of Austria. He noted that GRETA's 4th evaluation report on Austria provided an accurate and well-balanced account of the situation in the country. Mr Sattler referred to developments which occurred after GRETA's visit, such as the adoption of the 7th National Action Plan for Combating Human Trafficking, for the period 2024 to 2027, which includes measures addressing vulnerable groups, such as children, asylum seekers, trans-persons, persons with disabilities as well as a focus on the role of survivors. Further, he informed the Committee of the setting up of two new working groups as part of Austria's Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings, on the topic of non-punishment of victims of trafficking and on future perspectives. The full text of Mr Sattler's statement is set out in Appendix V.

25. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Austria and decided to request the Government of Austria to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 20 June 2027.

## 5.5 Croatia

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

27. Mr Alen Tahiri, Director of the Croatian Government's Office on Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities and National Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, thanked GRETA for the professionalism and partnership demonstrated during the fourth evaluation of Croatia. He informed the Committee of the forthcoming organisation of a high-level forum on combating human trafficking, involving the Croatian Parliament and representatives of the Roma community, as well as plans to organise educational activities on trafficking in the largest Roma settlements. Further, Mr Tahiri indicated that training had been provided to more than 80 labour inspectors and the number of work permits issued to migrant workers had increased to 200,000. In addition, the law on state compensation for victims of crime was in the process of being revised with a view to removing barriers related to the victims' nationality, and there were plans to adopt a specific provision on the non-punishment of victims of trafficking. Mr Tahiri also noted that Croatia had set up an independent border monitoring mechanism and strengthened efforts to identify victims amongst asylum seekers and migrants.

28. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Croatia and decided to request the Government of Croatia to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 20 June 2027.

## 5.6 Cyprus

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

30. Ms Elena Eracleous, from the Ministry of Migration and International Protection of Cyprus, expressed appreciation of GRETA's work and the fourth evaluation report on Cyprus and affirmed the importance which Cyprus attaches to combating human trafficking. She referred to the adoption of a new anti-trafficking strategy for the period 2023-2026, accompanied by a detailed action plan. Regarding the identification of potential trafficking victims among asylum seekers, Ms Eracleous noted that a vulnerability assessment was systematically carried out at the Pournara First Reception Centre, and the duration of the stay of unaccompanied children minors had been reduced to the minimum possible. The full text of Ms Eracleous' statement is set out in Appendix VI.

31. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Cyprus and decided to request the Government of Cyprus to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 20 June 2027.

## 5.7 Republic of Moldova

32. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning the Republic of Moldova.

33. Ms Lilia Pascal, Head of the Human Rights and Civil Society Co-operation Directorate and Secretary of the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, State Chancellery of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, thanked GRETA for the latest report and the productive dialogue. She highlighted the Government's efforts related to the thematic focus of the fourth evaluation round of the Convention, such as the approval of a national programme for the integration of foreigners, the preparation of a new draft Law on admission, stay and supervision of foreigners in the Republic of Moldova, and the evaluation of the Law on rehabilitation of victims of crime. Further, the piloting of the Victim Protection Coordinator mechanism had been initiated. To address the routine use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to recruit and exploit victims of trafficking, training had been provided to investigative officers of the Centre for Combating Trafficking in Persons. Moreover, five training sessions had been conducted for specialists working in Centres for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities with a view to strengthening their capacities to detect and combat human trafficking among people with disabilities. The full text of Ms Pascal's statement is set out in Appendix VII.

34. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of the Republic of Moldova and decided to request the Government of the Republic of Moldova to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 20 June 2027.

## 5.8 Slovak Republic

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

36. Ms Miroslava Fialová, from the Information Centre for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Crime Prevention of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic, thanked GRETA and its Secretariat for the fruitful dialogue and the comprehensive report. She noted that there was an ongoing process of assigning responsibilities for the implementation of the recommendations amongst relevant institutions, and that the Plenipotentiary for Persons with Disabilities and the Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society had been invited to participate. Further, Ms Fialova referred to proposals for legislative amendments related to the offence of human trafficking and the non-punishment of victims of human trafficking for administrative misdemeanors. The full text of Ms Fialova's statement is set out in Appendix VIII.

37. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of the Slovak Republic and decided to request the Government of the Slovak Republic to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 20 June 2027.

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

38. 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 Azerbaijan, North Macedonia and Poland in the context of the third evaluation round of the Convention. The authorities of Serbia, Slovenia and Spain had asked for an extension of the deadline for submitting their reports, which was 16 June 2025. The Chair invited the representatives of the countries which had submitted reports to take the floor.

### *Third evaluation round*

## 6.1 Azerbaijan

39. Mr Samir Garayev, Police Colonel and Head of Division at the Main Department on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Azerbaijan, affirmed the commitment of the Government of Azerbaijan to combating human trafficking and expressed his gratitude to the Secretariat for the organisation of a round-table in Baku in April 2025. He highlighted some of the measures taken by Azerbaijan in response to the Committee of the Parties' recommendation, such as the implementation of the fourth National Action Plan on Combating Human Trafficking (2020-2024) and the preparation of the fifth National Action Plan for the period 2025-2030, taking into account the recommendations to guarantee effective access to justice and compensation for victims of trafficking, strengthen efforts for the detection and investigation of the cases of human trafficking, monitor the labour market, improve the situation of migrant workers, increase the participation of NGOs at all stages of action against human trafficking, and reinforce the role and capacity of the child protection systems to prevent the sexual abuse and exploitation. The full text of Mr Garayev's statement is set out in Appendix IX.

40. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to take the floor and share GRETA's assessment of the Azerbaijani authorities' report. Ms Rijken noted that the report of the Azerbaijani authorities provided information in relation to all the issues included in the Committee of the Parties' recommendation. According to the report, training had been provided to relevant legal professionals, including on victim compensation,

as well as to the migration authorities and labour inspectors. A Working Group had been set up in April 2024 to detect and prevent cases of child labour and child sexual exploitation, as well as strengthening inter-agency coordination. Data on the number of convictions for human trafficking suggested that their number had remained stable (12-14 per year). Increased attention had reportedly been paid to investigating labour exploitation and detecting irregular labour migrants, however, it was not clear if any of the detected labour exploitation cases had been prosecuted as trafficking in human beings. The number of victims placed in the specialised shelter had reportedly increased. Further, measures had reportedly been taken to protect the confidentiality of judicial documents sent to victims. However, there had been no changes as regards access to free legal aid for victims of trafficking. Neither had there been changes to the law providing for the imposition of court fees on victims of trafficking when bringing civil claims. Regarding state compensation, the amount of the one-off payment from the State Assistance Fund for Victims of Trafficking had not been increased. The suspension of all labour inspections related to entrepreneurial activity continued to be in force and could be an obstacle for detecting cases of labour exploitation.

## 6.2 North Macedonia

41. Ms Maja Boshnjakovska, Chief Advisor at the Department for EU and International Co-operation of the Ministry of the Interior of North Macedonia, referred to the round-table organised on 2 April in Skopje as a follow-up to the third evaluation of the implementation of the Convention by North Macedonia. She highlighted several important developments, in particular the adoption of the Law on Financial Compensation for Victims of Violent Crimes, the establishment of the corresponding commission, and the incorporation of the principle of non-punishment of victims into the Criminal Code. Ms Boshnjakovska also expressed appreciation of the possibility to participate in the recent conference held in Malta and to engage with professionals from various fields. The full text of Ms Boshnjakovska's statement is set out in Appendix X.

42. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to take the floor and share GRETA's assessment of the Macedonian authorities' report. Ms Rijken indicated that the report submitted by the authorities of North Macedonia addressed all issues included in the Committee of the Parties' recommendation. The provisions of the new Law of Free Legal Aid had reportedly been applied to victims of human trafficking. Another positive development was the establishment of the Commission for Compensation, pursuant to the new Law on Payment of Monetary Compensation to Victims of Violent Crimes, which had entered into force in 2023. Further, the capacity of the National Unit for the Suppression of Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking had reportedly been strengthened, including its technical capacity. In 2023, a Memorandum of Understanding had been signed between the State Labour Inspectorate and the Ministry of the Interior to strengthen cooperation and the timely detection of trafficking victims. The work of the mobile teams set up in five cities to detect potential victims of trafficking had also been reinforced, resulting in the referral of an increasing number of people, including foreign nationals. Despite these improvements, several issues of concern remained. There was still only one shelter for female victims of trafficking and no shelter accommodation was available for male victims. Access to health care for victims who were not covered by health insurance remained a problem. There was not information on steps taken to ensure that victims were enabled to claim and obtain compensation as part of criminal proceedings.

## 6.3 Poland

43. Ms Aleksandra Chołuj, Head of the Division for Counteracting Trafficking in Human Beings, Hate Crimes and Action Support Crimes at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration of Poland (who participated in the meeting online) indicated that Poland's report concerning the steps taken to implement the Committee of the Parties' recommendation had been submitted the day before the meeting and apologised for the delay.

44. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to take the floor and share GRETA's assessment of the Polish authorities' report. Ms Rijken noted that the Polish authorities' report referred to a number of positive developments, such as the adoption in March 2025 of a new National Action Plan against Human Trafficking and the decision to develop a comprehensive anti-trafficking law. Moreover, the Labour Inspectorate had



adopted a three-year plan (2025-28) and a separate law had been adopted to regulate the access of foreigners to employment in Poland and the activities of temporary employment agencies. Further, a procedure had reportedly been put into place by the Border Guard to screen persons intercepted at the border with Belarus for vulnerabilities. It was also positive to note that the human resources of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration Unit for Combating Human Trafficking had been increased.

#### 6.4 Serbia

45. The consideration of the report of the Serbian authorities was postponed to the next Committee of the Parties' meeting.

#### 6.5 Slovenia

46. The consideration of the report of the Slovenian authorities was postponed to the next Committee of the Parties' meeting.

#### 6.6 Spain

47. The consideration of the report of the Spanish authorities was postponed to the next Committee of the Parties' meeting.

Agenda item 7: Fourth evaluation round of the Convention: discussion on a procedure for supervising the implementation of Committee of the Parties' recommendations

48. The Chair recalled that prior to the meeting, she had invited any interested and available members of the Committee to take part in informal consultations on 27 May 2024, with the aim of preparing the discussion of this agenda item. Some 28 State Parties had been represented at the informal meeting. The discussions had focused on two separate questions: (i) how can the role of the Committee of the Parties be strengthened in supervising the implementation of the recommendations made to States Parties? (ii) should the Rules of the election procedure of members of GRETA (Resolution CM/Res(2013)28) be revised in relation to the language requirements?

49. As regards the first question, the Chair noted that it had transpired from the informal consultations that there were reservations concerning the proposal for the introduction of a procedure for supervising the implementation of Committee of the Parties' recommendations, to the extent that it would create additional workload for the national authorities and the Secretariat. She therefore concluded that there was no support for the proposal for a new procedure. During the discussions, several members had referred to "monitoring fatigue" caused for the numerous requests to respond to questionnaires or receive visits which were being made by different international organisations working on combating human trafficking, creating a reporting burden for the national authorities. The need for better coordination with the OSCE in particular was stressed, with a view to avoiding duplication and competition. Another point made concerned reinforced dialogue with the national focal points (national co-ordinators).

50. In relation to the second question, during the informal consultations, several members had made proposals for amending the Rules of the election procedure of GRETA members in relation to the language criteria requirements. On the other hand, several other members had expressed the view that the current criteria were sufficient and that there should be no additional language requirements for the election of GRETA members.

51. The Chair opened the floor for any interventions and questions.

52. Ms Ernesta Rousseva, Chief Expert at the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of Bulgaria, noted that the Secretariat of the Commission was overburdened and that any new procedures related to monitoring the implementation of the Convention should avoid creating additional workload.

53. Ms Roxana Maracineanu, General Secretary of MIPROF, France, referred to the recently published study by GRETA on the financial approach to combating human trafficking and the added value of GRETA reports in highlighting how different countries deal with similar issues. She suggested that GRETA prepares and shares examples of good practices identified in different countries which could be helpful to others.

54. Ambassador Jordi, Permanent Representative of Andorra to the Council of Europe, congratulated Ms Rijken on her election as President of GRETA and expressed the wish to continue discussing in an informal way how to improve coordination with the national authorities and ensure that GRETA's country reports reflect the national situation. As regards the language criteria for the election of GRETA members, he noted that there would be benefits in having both official languages of the Council of Europe represented amongst the GRETA membership.

55. GRETA's President agreed that it would be important to discuss further how to strengthen collaboration between GRETA and the Parties without creating an additional workload. She noted that there were already procedures in place, such as the mid-term reporting by States Parties to the Committee of the Parties on progress made in the implementation of the Convention, which was preceded by round-table meetings organised by the Secretariat. Moreover, GRETA had established a "hierarchy" of recommendations, using different verbs to indicate their level of urgency, which could facilitate the work of the Committee of the Parties. GRETA's President also noted that there were ongoing discussions with the OSCE on how to avoid "monitoring fatigue" and stressed that the monitoring role of GRETA had a legal basis in the Convention. As regards the proposal made by the representative of France, GRETA's President agreed that it would be useful to provide good practice examples from different countries which could be used by others, something that GRETA had done back in 2021 when a compendium of good practices in combating trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation had been issued.

56. Ms Sophie Heegaard-Schroeter, Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the Council of Europe, spoke in favour of revising the Rules of the election procedure of GRETA members in relation to the language criteria requirements, in particular rules 4 and 13. She proposed to continue discussing this issue informally and to include it on the agenda of the next Committee of the Parties' meeting.

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

57. 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 Azerbaijan, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia and Slovenia to discuss progress in the implementation of the third-round recommendations, as well as the forthcoming holding of such round-table meetings in the Netherlands, Sweden, Iceland and Andorra. She also referred to the ongoing anti-trafficking co-operation projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia, and highlighted the support provided to Malta by the co-operation project which had ended in January 2025 in the adoption of a new national strategy for combating human trafficking. A new co-operation project on the setting up of specialised support services for child victims of trafficking in Austria had started in January 2025, with funding from the European Union's Technical Support Instrument, and the Executive Secretary drew the attention of representatives of EU member States to the possibility to request funding for anti-trafficking projects under this facility.

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

58. The Chair gave the floor to Mr Oscar Alarcón-Jiménez, Executive Secretary of the Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs (Santiago de Compostela Convention), who informed the Committee of the recent activities of the Committee of the Parties to the Santiago de Compostela Convention and the state of signature and ratifications of that Convention, and invited all Council of Europe member states to join the Convention. The full text of the statement of Mr Alarcón-Jiménez is set out in Appendix XI.

59. The Chair gave the floor to Mr Dimitris Mantzos, Chair of the Sub-committee on Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). He referred to the adoption in October 2024 of a Resolution and a Recommendation to the Committee of Ministers on "A shared European approach to address migrant smuggling" and noted that Articles 7 and 8 of Resolution 2568(2024) specify that the crime of migrant smuggling is not equal in nature to irregular border crossing, and that the need for international protection of each person should be examined in a fair and individualised manner. Mr Mantzos also indicated that PACE had invited States to clarify that people in need of protection should never be criminalised or administratively sanctioned for crossing a border unauthorised, pursuant to Article 31 of the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and Article 26 of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. This position had been taken on board by the Committee of Ministers in the framework of its work towards the adoption of a Recommendation on combatting and preventing the smuggling of migrants. In addition, Mr Mantzos noted that the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Asylum Seekers of PACE was closely monitoring the development of border procedures, including as part of the enactment of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. The full text of Mr Mantzos' statement is set out in Appendix XII.

Agenda item 10: Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee of the Parties

60. The Chair noted that her second term of office and the first term of office of the Vice-Chair of the Committee of the Parties would expire on 21 June 2025. She recalled that the term of office of the Chair and the Vice-Chair was one year and could be renewed once. The Chair indicated that prior to the meeting, Ambassador Sini Paukkunen-Mykkänen (Finland) had expressed her interest in assuming the role of Chair. No other candidates for the Chair were proposed. The Committee elected Ambassador Paukkunen-Mykkänen as its Chair by acclamation for a first term of office of one year.

61. Ambassador Paukkunen-Mykkänen thanked the Committee for the confidence placed in her and expressed her readiness to continue building on the work of her predecessors and to promote strengthened implementation of the Convention.

62. The Chair invited members to elect a new Vice-Chair of the Committee. She indicated that Ambassador Agnese Vilde (Latvia) had expressed interest in assuming the role of Vice-Chair. No other candidates were proposed. The Committee elected Ambassador Vilde as its Vice-Chair by acclamation for a first term of office of one year.

63. Ambassador Vilde thanked the Committee for the confidence placed in her, acknowledged the important work of GRETA and noted her commitment to contributing to the constructive work of the Committee.

64. The Committee thanked the outgoing Chair for her important work and commitment to the implementation of the Convention. The outgoing Chair stressed that she had treated her role not just as work, but as a cause which requires devotion, and that during her term of office, she had aimed to achieve better coordination between the Committee and GRETA.

Agenda item 11: Dates of future meetings

65. The Committee decided to hold its next meeting on either 28 November or 12 December 2025.

Agenda item 12: Other business

Agenda item 13: Adoption of the list of decisions taken

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

- Adoption of recommendations concerning Albania, Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Liechtenstein, the Republic of Moldova, the Slovak Republic and Ukraine;
- Postponing the examination of the reports submitted in reply to the Committee of the Parties' recommendations by Serbia, Slovenia and Spain to the Committee's 37th meeting;
- Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee.

## Appendix I

### Agenda

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the draft agenda
3. State of signatures and ratifications of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
4. 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 Liechtenstein and Ukraine (third evaluation round) and by Albania, Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Republic of Moldova and the Slovak Republic (fourth evaluation round) and adoption of recommendations in respect of these Parties

#### *Third evaluation round*

- 6.1. Liechtenstein
- 6.2. Ukraine

#### *Fourth evaluation round*

- 6.3. Albania
- 6.4. Austria
- 6.5. Croatia
- 6.6. Cyprus
- 6.7. Republic of Moldova
- 6.8. Slovak Republic

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

#### *Third evaluation round*

- 7.1. Azerbaijan
- 7.2. North Macedonia
- 7.3. Poland
- 7.4. Serbia
- 7.5. Slovenia
- 7.6. Spain

8. Fourth evaluation round of the Convention: discussion on a procedure for supervising the implementation of Committee of the Parties' recommendations
9. Information on activities aimed at strengthening the implementation of GRETA's conclusions and the Committee of the Parties' recommendations
10. Information on the anti-trafficking activities of other Council of Europe bodies and international organisations of interest to the Committee of the Parties
11. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee of the Parties
12. Dates of future meetings
13. Other business
14. Adoption of the list of decisions taken

## Appendix II

### List of participants

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

##### ALBANIA / ALBANIE

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Mr. Andreu Jordi  
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Mr Michael O' Flaherty  
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Mr Oscar Alarcón-Jiménez  
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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 Conny Rijken  
President of GRETA

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*Directorate General of Democracy and Human,  
Dignity /  
Direction générale de la démocratie et de la  
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Secretariat of the Council of Europe Convention  
on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings  
(GRETA and Committee of the Parties) /  
Secrétariat de la Convention du Conseil de  
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Ms Teresa Armengol de la Hoz  
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Interpreters / Interprètes

Ms Katia di Stefano  
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Ms Remy Jain

## Appendix III

### Statement by Ms Conny Rijken, President of GRETA

Ms Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is the first time that I have the honour to address the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, following my election as President of GRETA in March. I already had the opportunity to meet some of you at the end of May, during the informal consultations that were held prior to this meeting concerning the monitoring system of the Convention. This is my second mandate as a member of GRETA, and I look forward to fulfilling my role, building on what has been achieved by my predecessors, and contributing through my own experience. Since September 2022, I have been the Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children, an authoritative institute which carries out research and provides advice to the government of the Netherlands on how to combat these issues. I am also Professor of Human Trafficking and Globalisation and a member of the advisory board of the Dutch Coordination Centre on Human Trafficking, CoMensha.

Since the last meeting of the Committee of the Parties on 28 November 2024, GRETA has held one plenary meeting, in March, during which it adopted four final reports, concerning Albania, Croatia and the Republic of Moldova (under the 4<sup>th</sup> evaluation round of monitoring the implementation of the Convention) and Ukraine (under the 3<sup>rd</sup> evaluation round). Moreover, GRETA published four reports adopted at its preceding meeting, which took place in November 2024, concerning Austria, Cyprus, the Slovak Republic and Liechtenstein. These six reports are the subject of draft recommendations that you will discuss and adopt today.

GRETA also published the 14<sup>th</sup> general report on its activities, covering the year 2024, which includes a chapter summarising the results of 15 years of monitoring of the implementation of the Convention, outlines the progress made, and pinpoints remaining challenges.

As noted in that report, a number of Council of Europe member states are experiencing a shift in their human trafficking profile. While they were previously known primarily as countries of origin – since their nationals were subjected to exploitation abroad – they increasingly turn also into countries of destination for foreign victims, as well as of exploitation of their own nationals. This change requires changes in law – for example, to ensure better protection of labour and social rights of migrant workers – as well as strategic policy planning and implementation of measures in multiple areas. Many established practices and systems – such as approaches to risk environments, victim identification and referral, and victim assistance – must be modified or adapted. Additionally, new services are required; for instance, the unavailability of interpreters can significantly impact victim support and reduce access to assistance. As a result, both the number of institutions that need to be involved and coordinated, and the range of issues that need to be addressed, have expanded significantly.

Another noteworthy trend is the increase in cases of human trafficking for the purpose of forced criminality, which now ranks third in the number of victims detected globally. Trafficking for the purposes of forced criminality is a complex crime in which victims are compelled or forced to perform activities that constitute crimes or other unlawful activities. It is often linked with other forms of organised crime such as drug trafficking, property crimes, migrant smuggling, extortion, money laundering, document and payment card fraud, and cybercrime. However, trafficking for the purposes of forced criminality is often underrepresented – or even missing – in the statistics, highlighting the need for changes in national legislation and data collection, prioritisation in law enforcement efforts, consistent application of the non-punishment principle, as well as more research.

Traffickers increasingly use the internet in the recruitment of victims via advertisements and gaming sites, as well as social media to groom young people to both engage and recruit others. On occasion, they blackmail their victims by using compromising images, or get them hooked on drugs, thus forcing them to accrue drug debts. In the course of the ongoing fourth evaluation round of monitoring the implementation of the Convention, GRETA is paying particular attention to the use of information and communication technology to commit human trafficking offences, as well as the use of technological innovations to harness the potential of technology to effectively combat human trafficking.

In this context, I would like to commend the organisation last week in Malta of the high-level conference “Empowering Change: Technology and Artificial Intelligence in the Fight against Human Trafficking”, under the Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The event explored how emerging technologies can support efforts to prevent human trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute perpetrators, while upholding human rights. Through panel discussions and interactive workshops, participants focused on the ethical use of artificial intelligence, securing digital evidence, and fostering cross-sectoral partnerships to strengthen the global response to trafficking in human beings. The relevance of the new Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law was highlighted in this connection, as well as of the Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime on enhanced co-operation and disclosure of electronic evidence.

The focus of the 4<sup>th</sup> evaluation round of the Convention on vulnerabilities to human trafficking and measures to prevent them, to identify and assist vulnerable victims, and to punish the offenders. Elevated risks are associated with vulnerable groups in society, as human trafficking is significantly influenced by various structural factors that cannot be addressed solely within the framework of anti-trafficking policies. Bearing in mind the complexity and intersectionality of vulnerabilities to trafficking, GRETA examines, in particular, the measures taken in respect of children, persons with disabilities, disadvantaged minorities, migrant workers, asylum seekers, and LGBTI+ persons. As pointed out earlier, GRETA has so far published six country reports under this new evaluation round. Five more final reports will be adopted at the forthcoming GRETA meeting, and another 11 countries are in the process of evaluation.

This year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. The comprehensive provisions of this ground-breaking treaty have translated into real progress in national legislation, policies and practice, making a lasting impact on how countries tackle human trafficking through the lens of the human rights-based and victim-centred approach followed by the Convention. The Explanatory report of the Convention notes that the monitoring system foreseen by the Convention is one of its “main strengths”.<sup>1</sup> These are not just empty words: the independent and systematic monitoring undertaken by GRETA has triggered many positive changes, resulting in new legislation, the adoption of national strategies and action plans, and greater protection of the rights of victims of human trafficking. States have engaged with GRETA, preparing for each new evaluation, and organising high-level discussions on how to implement the recommendations made.

Beyond the periodic visits and subsequent reports, GRETA maintains an ongoing dialogue with States Parties. Each year, a meeting is organised of national anti-trafficking coordinators and rapporteurs. In order to avoid duplication with the OSCE, eight years ago we decided to organise these meeting jointly, alternating between Strasbourg and Vienna. This year’s meeting will take place on 11-12 September in Strasbourg. It will focus on conflict-related trafficking in human beings, the links between human trafficking and drugs/forced criminality, and engagement with the private sector in combating human trafficking.

It is important that the Council of Europe preserves, uses and strengthens the convention-based monitoring tools that have been put in place. Other international instruments related to human trafficking, such as the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organised Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (“Palermo Protocol”), do not envisage a

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<sup>1</sup> See Explanatory report of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, paragraphs 36 and 354.

monitoring (review) mechanism. I have witnessed myself how difficult it has been to agree on a review mechanism – which is essentially a peer review process – and to make meaningful progress on it.

The Committee of the Parties has engaged during several meetings in reflections on how to strengthen the monitoring system of the Convention. For its part, GRETA is constantly reflecting on its working methods and is in a “listening mode” for any suggestions on how the implementation of the Convention could be strengthened.

I trust that the Committee of the Parties will continue reinforcing GRETA's monitoring findings through its work and support to States Parties in improving the implementation of the Convention.

Thank you for your attention.

## Appendix IV

### Statement by Mr Claudio Nardi, Counsellor, Office for Foreign Affairs of the Principality of Liechtenstein

Chair,

I wish to commend you for convening today's meeting. I also wish to thank GRETA and its secretariat for their invaluable support to this meeting.

Today, the Committee reviewed the third evaluation report by GRETA on Liechtenstein's implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. Based on the findings of the report, the Committee adopted a recommendation aimed at strengthening Liechtenstein's efforts to combat human trafficking. The recommendations reflect the Committee's continued commitment to supporting Liechtenstein in fully implementing the Convention and advancing the protection of victims' rights.

This recommendation the result of a constructive and collaborative process, marked by open dialogue and mutual engagement. I wish to pay special appreciation to Ms. Rita Penedo and Mr. Georgios Vanikiotis, members of GRETA, who conducted the GRETA visit in Liechtenstein. I also wish to commend Mr. Roemer Lemaître of the Secretariat of the Convention whose support was instrumental throughout the process. This visit once again proved that an on-going dialogue on the implementation of the Convention contributes to a strengthened response to trafficking of human beings.

Some of the recommendations in the report have already had a positive effect on Liechtenstein. For example, in response to GRETA's recommendation to ensure a more comprehensive national approach to combating trafficking in human beings by promoting the involvement of civil society organizations. In fact, our national roundtable for combatting human trafficking has invited Liechtenstein's National Human Rights Institution to its next meeting. We hope that this inclusion will enrich the dialogue and help to align national efforts with the practical civil society expertise in our joint fight against human trafficking.

Within the international community Liechtenstein actively advocates for an efficient and effective fight against trafficking in human beings and support a wide range of foreign policy initiatives and development projects. Liechtenstein thanks GRETA for recognizing its efforts in the fight against trafficking in human beings and for highlighting the Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking (FAST) initiative. Combating trafficking in human beings remains a top priority for us, and we remain fully committed to supporting practical, evidence-based approaches such as those outlined in the FAST Blueprint. Liechtenstein will continue to actively engage with international partners and contribute to initiatives that strengthen the financial sector's role in preventing and addressing modern slavery and human trafficking.

Madam Chair,

Let me assure you that we will continue to work actively to combat human trafficking within the international community and also in Liechtenstein. We are very much looking forward to presenting to you in two years on the measures realised on the basis of the recommendations adopted today.

I thank you.

## Appendix V

Statement by Mr Nikolaus Sattler,  
Unit for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Border Issues  
and Appeal Procedures,  
Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, Austria

Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentleman,

Thank you for giving me the floor to respond to the summary of the report on Austria provided by the newly elected President of GRETA. Please allow me to congratulate Conny Rijken on her election and wish her a successful start into this important position. At the outset, let me reiterate that Combating Human Trafficking remains a priority for Austria, also for the new federal government, which took off in March this year. We continue to act in close cooperation with international organisations and entities such as the Council of Europe and to comply with the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, and to cooperate with its monitoring system GRETA.

Since the beginning, GRETA has evaluated Austria four times; most recently at the beginning of December 2023, covering the period 2020-2023. In a very intensive week the evaluation team, focusing on vulnerabilities in human trafficking, had meetings with all pertinent stakeholders at national level and a full day visit to the region of Carinthia including a visit to a reception centre for asylum seekers.

The report, which is public and accessible, now is an accurate and well-balanced account of the situation in Austria. As outlined by GRETA's President, progress and a number of achievements confirm the determination of Austria to fight Trafficking in Human Beings, while in some areas there is still work to do. Therefore, please allow me to add some developments, which occurred after the GRETA evaluation mission left Austria.

First, a cornerstone in the fight against human trafficking is the 7th National Action Plan for Combating Human Trafficking, which was approved by the Council of Ministers on 12 March 2024 for the period of 2024 to 2027, reflecting the extension of its duration to 4 years. The current National Action Plan includes 103 measures divided into five chapters (National and International Coordination, Prevention, Protection of Victims, Prosecution and Monitoring). There is a focus on measures addressing vulnerable groups, such as children, asylum seekers, trans-persons, persons with disabilities as well as a focus on the role of survivors.

Secondly, strengthening international cooperation in the area of trafficking in human beings and creating synergies between governmental and nongovernmental bodies are of great importance. The cooperation between the various state actors involving the regions, social partners and NGOs in Austria play a crucial role in the fight against human trafficking, especially in the protection of victims.

Thirdly, the Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings continues to fulfil its role as the main policy making body together with its permanent working groups on the topics of Child Trafficking, Labour Exploitation and Sex Services. These have been complemented by an ad-hoc working group on specific topics of Non Punishment, to finish the guidelines on the application of the non-punishment principle. A new working group has been established on future perspectives, which has thus far met twice and has shaped a work programme on issues such as the National Referral Mechanism, national & regional cooperation and the inclusion of survivors.

As a final addition, the Federal Chancellery, Family and Youth Department has set up a project in cooperation with the Council of Europe and the European Union. Its goal is to establish a nationwide protection facility for children in Austria.



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Before coming to an end, I would like to mention the annual Vienna Conference on Combating Human Trafficking, which takes place on the 16 October 2025 at the Vienna School of International Studies, being our most prominent public awareness activity. This year's conference is headlined: "Building Resilience Now: Preventing Trafficking in Human Beings in Times of Crisis." Participation is also possible online and a programme and concept note will be circulated in due time.

Concluding, I would like to commend GRETA and the Secretariat for their invaluable work and thank you for your attention.

## Appendix VI

### Statement by Ms Elena Eracleous, Ministry of Migration and International Protection, Cyprus

Madam Chair,

On behalf of the Republic of Cyprus, allow me to begin by extending our appreciation to the members of GRETA and the Secretariat for their comprehensive report regarding the fourth evaluation round, as well as for the recommendations submitted.

We will consider these insights as we continue our efforts to improve the effectiveness of strategies for addressing the issue of human trafficking in Cyprus.

Human trafficking is a significant matter for the Cypriot Government. In this regard, we are pleased to highlight several new measures and initiatives undertaken since the third evaluation round. These include the adoption of the National Strategy on the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Human Beings for the period 2023-2026, accompanied by a detailed Action Plan, the creation of an Anti-Trafficking Unit within the Social Welfare Services, and the provision of specialized training and guidance to relevant staff for the identification of potential victims and prevention of trafficking.

Acknowledging the importance of the points raised in your recommendations, allow me to highlight following elements:

Regarding the identification of potential trafficking victims among asylum seekers, I wish to stress that, at the Pournara First Reception Centre, the vulnerability assessment is, systematically, applied to all families, all women, as well as minors. An assessment for single men is performed, if they have been identified as potentially vulnerable, during the submission of their application.

The duration of the stay of unaccompanied minors in the Pournara First Reception Centre, has been reduced to the minimum possible. After the streamlining of the relevant processes introduced by the Government of Cyprus, both the registration and the reception procedure are completed within six days.

As far as the age assessment process is concerned, it is launched immediately upon the conclusion of the registration and reception procedures. This process is generally completed within a period of approximately two weeks, and it is only required if the applicant cannot provide any proof of age. Currently, there are no pending cases.

On a very critical point, I wish to address the alleged pushbacks cited, and explicitly stress that the Republic of Cyprus has been fulfilling all its obligations in accordance to international law. Referring also to the definition of the term, Cyprus has never forced a person "to return to a country where there is a real risk of facing inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment". And this, despite the systematic facilitation of irregular migratory flows from Turkey to the areas under the effective control of the Republic through the occupied territories, followed by unauthorized crossings of the Green Line.

Notwithstanding the severe consequences of the Turkish invasion and the illegal occupation of 38% of our territory, Cyprus does not engage in any practices that could violate the principle of non-refoulement. We are currently hosting a substantial number of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection, representing almost 7% of our population, the majority of which, have arrived irregularly from Turkey. This demographic reality demonstrates our respect and commitment to humanitarian law.

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In conclusion, the Republic of Cyprus remains unwavering in its dedication to the fight against human trafficking, building on the progress made thus far and recognizing the profound importance of maintaining strong partnerships and fostering collaboration with GRETA. We are convinced that, through sustained efforts and strategic initiatives, we can contribute meaningfully to the global fight against trafficking, while protecting the fundamental principles of human rights and dignity.

Thank you for your attention.

## Appendix VII

Statement by Ms Lilia Pascal,  
Head of the Human Rights and Civil Society Co-operation Directorate  
Secretary of the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings,  
State Chancellery of the Government of the Republic of Moldova

Dear Chair,  
Madam President of GRETA,  
Esteemed audience,

First of all, please allow me to thank GRETA for its latest report on the Republic of Moldova, as well as for the productive dialogue with the national institutions.

The Republic of Moldova has made significant efforts over the years to establish a comprehensive legislative and institutional framework, the national referral mechanism of human trafficking survivors, to ensure proactive investigation and prosecution of THB cases. All our anti-trafficking efforts are reflected in relevant national reports and recognized in leading international reports. Recent developments are also included in our comments to the GRETA's Report.

Among the actions mentioned above, I would like to highlight the Government's efforts related to the thematic focus of the fourth evaluation round of the Convention. As such, the Republic of Moldova:

- Approved a new National Program on the gradual integration of foreigners in the Republic of Moldova for the period of 2025-2027, which places particular emphasis on the specific needs of women and girls, ensuring assistance and protection for foreign citizens who are victims of domestic violence, violence against women, and human trafficking.
- Drafted a new Law on admission, stay and supervision of foreigners in the Republic of Moldova. The Law is expected to generate a favourable impact on private sector, benefitting from foreign labour, and on foreigners who intend to carry out economic, educational or social activities. Thus, the new Law also aims to reduce the risks of pseudo-legalization and undeclared work, by establishing effective verification, surveillance and return mechanisms, to contribute to reducing the risks of exploitation of foreign labour, precarious work or human trafficking.
- Is currently drafting an evaluation of Law No. 137/2016 on rehabilitation of victims of crime to align the normative framework of the Republic of Moldova with the EU acquis.
- In order to ensure a comprehensive and effective support for the victims of crime, particularly THB victims, the piloting of the Victim Protection Coordinator (VPC) mechanism has been initiated. Aimed at mainstreaming victim-centred and trauma-informed approaches, this mechanism is implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP).
- To address the routine use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to recruit and exploit victims of trafficking, the General Police Inspectorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, with support from IOM, strengthened the capacities of the specialized investigative officers of the Centre for Combating Trafficking in Persons (CCTP) through an international Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) expert who guided the officers on the use of special techniques and software for collecting and analysing digital evidence.

- To improve the protection of persons with disabilities, the MLSP with IOM support conducted five training sessions for specialists working in Placement Centres for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities with a view to strengthening their capacities in increasing identification and combating human trafficking among people with disabilities.

Despite these efforts, we recognize that there is still room for improvement and that many more actions remain to be done.

With reference to the GRETA's conclusions and proposals set out in the report, the national authorities take note of the findings and reaffirm their firm commitment to continuously monitor developments in the field, identify any shortcomings, and implement appropriate corrective measures.

Finally, let me thank the Council of Europe member states, especially the States Parties to the anti-trafficking Convention, for their valuable assistance provided through the Council of Europe Action Plans for the Republic of Moldova – both the previous and the current ones.

We also extend our gratitude to the Secretariat of the Convention, and to the Executive Secretary Mrs Petya Nestorova and her team, for their openness, productive cooperation and support provided to the Republic of Moldova.

Last but not the least, I wish to extend my best wishes to everyone for a restful and enjoyable summer break. Thank you for your attention and continued dedication.

## Appendix VIII

Statement by Ms Miroslava Fialova,  
Crime Prevention Department, Information Centre for Combating Trafficking  
in Human Beings and Crime Prevention,  
Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic

Dear Madam Chair, Madam Executive Secretary, Distinguished Ambassadors, colleagues,

Since April 2024, I have been acting as the contact person for communication with GRETA and the Secretariat of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in relation to the evaluation mechanism arising from the Convention in question, and at the same time as the representative of the Office of National Rapporteur for the field of combating trafficking in human beings in the Slovak Republic.

In my current statement, I represent the governmental entities of the Slovak Republic, which, within the framework of the 4th round of evaluation of the Slovak Republic, actively cooperated in providing information and comments in the preparation of the draft and final GRETA report on the Slovak Republic.

First of all, I would like to thank the GRETA evaluators who visited the Slovak Republic in spring 2024 and especially to the Secretariat for further dialogue and cooperation in the preparation of GRETA's final report on the Slovak Republic. We particularly appreciate their expertise and experience, which is also reflected in the recommendations of the final GRETA report on the Slovak Republic.

In connection with the evaluation process of the Slovak Republic in this evaluation round, I would like to appreciate the efforts and cooperation of the Secretariat, although I would like to point out that when receiving requests for comments on the draft and the final GRETA report on the Slovak Republic, it was a challenge for me as the contact person to collect the positions of the Slovak authorities, as the requests were delivered to us during the summer holidays and just before Christmas. In the future, we would appreciate if the process could be timed and planned in such a way that these externalities are taken into account. I am also aware of the challenge for the Secretariat in meeting the deadline for finalizing and publishing the final GRETA report on the Slovak Republic.

Based on the GRETA recommendations in the final report, we are fully aware of our obligations under the Convention, although there are repeated recommendations during the evaluation rounds that the Slovak authorities must continue to pay attention to, whether they require legislative change or proper implementation, or the implementation of activities within the framework of soft measures. A current challenge for the Slovak authorities is the recommendation in relation to the use of information and communication technologies, where we still have a lot of work to do. We are currently at the stage of finalizing the scope of the responsibility and co-responsibility of the Slovak authorities for the implementation of the recommendations, and we have also invited the sector of non-governmental and international organizations active in the Slovak Republic in the fight against trafficking in human beings, the Plenipotentiary for Persons with Disabilities and the Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society to participate in their implementation.

Currently, legislative measures aimed at amending the criminal codes and related laws are being discussed in the Slovak Republic, including in relation to the introduction of a new merits for the crime of using the services of victims of human trafficking and the adequacy of sentences for the crime of human trafficking committed by natural and legal persons, as well as the amount of sentences actually imposed, with the desired minimization of the imposition of suspended sentences. The draft amendment to the Act on Misdemeanors has undergone an internal comment procedure at the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic, which will regulate the non-punishment of victims of human trafficking for administrative misdemeanors. This amendment is expected to enter into force in 2026.

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I would like to thank the Committee of the Parties for adopting the draft recommendation on the implementation of the Convention as proposed by the Secretariat with a deadline of 20 June 2027. After, the information on adopting the recommendations from the final GRETA report will be submitted to the government of the Slovak Republic. We appreciate that the Secretariat has welcomed the progress made by the Slovak Republic, such as progress in legislative implementation of the non-punishment provision, adoption of the 6th National Programme and Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings in the Slovak Republic or simplification of the national referral mechanism. We confirm in particular that we will continue the dialogue on further recommendations in the 4th final report with GRETA.

Many thanks for the opportunity to speak.

## Appendix IX

Statement by Mr Samir Garayev,  
Police Colonel, Head of Division,  
Main Department on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings,  
Ministry of Internal Affairs of Azerbaijan

Madam Chair,  
Dear colleagues and participants,

I would like to greet everyone from Baku and want to apologize for not being able to participate in-person at the current meeting.

Let me introduce myself, I am Samir Garayev, police colonel, Head of Division in the Main Department on Combating Against Human Trafficking in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan within the framework of GRETA.

Before starting my speech, I would like to express my gratitude to the GRETA, especially to its Secretariat for the organisation of today's meeting.

In addition, let me express that the Government of Azerbaijan is always committed to its obligations in the field of combating human trafficking stemming from the Convention.

Dear Participants,

I would like to inform you the Government of Azerbaijan has already submitted its reply to the recommendation of the Committee of Parties on 11 June 2025. Hence, I want to emphasize certain points related to the activities and efforts of Azerbaijan to combat human trafficking.

The fourth National Action Plan on Combating Human Trafficking, which covers 2020-2024 years successfully executed by the state bodies of Azerbaijan with the participation of NGO's and other bodies, including Human Right Commissioner Office, Bar Association etc. The Government is currently preparing its fifth National Action Plan for the period of 2025-2030 years. This action plan is prepared in accordance with the recommendations of GRETA – it would guarantee effective access to justice and compensation for victims of trafficking, strengthen the efforts for detection and investigation of the cases of human trafficking, ensure financial investigations, provide the security for the victims, monitor the labour market, improve the situation of migrant workers, increase the participation of NGO's at all stages of action against human trafficking, reinforce the role and capacity of the child protection systems to prevent the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and to protect them in general, determine the criminal liability for using the services provided by the victims of human trafficking, etc.

In addition to abovementioned points, the Government of Azerbaijan considers that the substance of human trafficking has changed to some extent, especially due to the technological developments (I meant because of Information and Communication technologies, artificial intelligence and others). Accordingly, it necessitates to restructure our activities in accordance with today's challenges, which could facilitate the anti-trafficking efforts. Therefore, the information communication technology and artificial intelligence (their potential impacts anti-trafficking activities, including positive and negative ones) should be considered.

In general, combating human trafficking is important and integral part of activities carried out by the Government of Azerbaijan and we are considering the recommendations of GRETA as important and effective means to prevent human trafficking.



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Finally, I believe that our cooperation with GRETA will continue in this direction and we will accomplish to prevent human trafficking in all spheres of today's complicated and ever-changing environment.

Thank you for your attention.

## Appendix X

Statement by Ms Maja Boshnjakovska,  
Chief Advisor, Department for EU and International Co-operation  
Ministry of the Interior of North Macedonia

North Macedonia, throughout the third evaluation round, has demonstrated its strong commitment to meeting the obligations set out in the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. The National Commission has shown itself to be a reliable partner to international organizations and continues to work diligently on the implementation of new policies and recommendations.

At the roundtable held on 2 April 2025 in Skopje, representatives from both state institutions and the civil sector responded thoroughly to the comments provided by the Council of Europe experts. Several important developments were highlighted during the discussion - among them, the adoption of the Law on Financial Compensation for Victims of Violent Crimes, the establishment of the corresponding commission, the numerous trainings and activities undertaken, as well as the continued professional development of the police, prosecution, and judiciary. We also emphasized the ongoing progress in international cooperation.

In addition, the principle of non-punishment of victims has now been incorporated into our Criminal Code, further strengthening the human rights-based approach to combating trafficking. Moreover, the new Law on Foreigners contains specific provisions addressing the status and protection of victims of trafficking in human beings, marking another important step forward in our legal framework.

As we now look ahead to the upcoming fourth evaluation round and the expected questionnaire from your side, we remain fully committed to aligning our national legislation with the new EU Directive 2024/1472. In parallel, we are actively working to identify modern and effective solutions to detect and combat trafficking in human beings, especially in its increasingly frequent online manifestations.

I was especially pleased to have taken part in your recent conference held in Malta last week, where we had the opportunity to engage with professionals from various fields. It became clear during our discussions that, in this area, we may still not be fully prepared to effectively respond to this type of crime. This only strengthens the need for joint efforts and unified actions in order to confront the growing online dimension of trafficking.

We are fully aware that in the upcoming period, we must not pause in our efforts but continue to implement and operationalize additional measures and mechanisms. However, as a developing country, we are proud to note that we have already implemented certain provisions that are still not in place in some highly developed countries. I do not say this lightly, but rather based on informed discussions with colleagues from other countries, where we reached the conclusion that North Macedonia is taking tangible and commendable steps forward.

Thank you.

## Appendix XI

### Statement by Mr Oscar Alarcón-Jiménez, Executive Secretary to the Santiago de Compostela Convention

Thank you, Madam Chair, for convening this meeting, and to the Secretariat, particularly the Executive Secretary, for extending the invitation to this Secretariat. I would also like to extend my congratulations to the Chair of GRETA on her renewed mandate and wish her every success in her role.

This marks the first time the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs ("Santiago de Compostela Convention") is participating in this meeting, and we sincerely hope to continue strengthening our collaboration with this Committee and GRETA in the future. We look forward to working closely with you.

For those who may not know me, let me introduce myself: my name is Oscar Alarcón-Jiménez, and I serve as the Executive Secretary of the Santiago de Compostela Convention.

The connections between your Convention and the Santiago de Compostela Convention are clear.

It is truly inspiring to see that all CoE member States have ratified the Trafficking in Human Beings Convention, and I am delighted to be among you today.

However, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight that the Santiago de Compostela Convention currently has only 15 Parties, from which 14 are CoE member States, as well as Costa Rica. With your permission, Madam Chair, I would like to kindly encourage those CoE Member States that have not yet done so to consider signing and ratifying the Santiago de Compostela Convention. In particular, there are 12 countries that have signed the Convention, from which 11 are CoE member States (as well as Chile). Your support to encourage accession of CoE member States would be invaluable in furthering our shared goals.

The Committee of the Parties to the Santiago de Compostela Convention was established just three years ago, so we are still relatively new, but no less committed to our mission. Since its inception, the CoP has successfully adopted its Rules of Procedure and shifted its focus to the substantive work of the Committee, particularly the development of the monitoring system.

The first monitoring round is already underway (focusing on prevention and awareness mechanisms to counter trafficking in human organs), with the questionnaire formally adopted. I am pleased to note that all Parties have submitted their Country Progress Questionnaires, which have now been carefully reviewed.

The first round provides support to the Parties in indicating areas where implementation of the Convention has been achieved substantially or where further work may be required. It covers:

- the general legal framework and alignment of the Convention,
- prosecution of perpetrators of trafficking in human organs, and
- prevention of and combating against trafficking in human organs.

The findings will be finalised and adopted this October in the CoP plenary meeting.

While we may be a young committee, we are making steady progress and remain fully dedicated to advancing the goals of the Convention.

I would like to highlight a growing concern that requires our collective attention: the rise of transplant tourism, particularly through certain commercial actors, including online platforms, that facilitate organ transplants for European citizens in third countries.

This practice directly contradicts the principles of the Santiago de Compostela Convention, as well as the fundamental ethical standards set by the Oviedo Convention, which upholds informed consent and the prohibition of financial gain in organ transplantation.

As this issue becomes increasingly prevalent, it is crucial that we address it with urgency and unity. I urge all Parties present here to remain vigilant and take necessary measures to prevent such exploitation, in line with our shared commitment to ethical transplantation practices. These online websites are available outside there.

In response to multiple media inquiries regarding organ trafficking in Europe and beyond, an internal task force was established within the Council of Europe Secretariat and a [FAQ document on Trafficking in Human Organs](#) was drafted to address potential questions from journalists.

In addition, and related to this last point, during the last CoP meeting, two weeks ago, a hearing took place to discuss and examine this phenomenon. The hearing underscored the global urgency of combating both organ trafficking and unethical transplant tourism through coordinated legal, medical and policy measures. In addition, key discussions highlighted the role of websites and social media in enabling illicit transplant tourism, as well as the challenges posed by the deep web and the rapidly evolving digital landscape.

The CoP emphasized the need for European countries to join the Santiago de Compostela Convention to effectively address this form of transnational organized crime. And it also stressed the importance of international collaboration, stronger enforcement, improved detection and reporting mechanisms, and continuous dialogue among stakeholders. A statement will be drafted in cooperation with other CoE bodies and adopted by the CoP.

Before closing, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to this CoP and to GRETA for your invaluable work in advancing our shared objectives.

The Santiago de Compostela CoP and this Secretariat remain fully committed and look forward to deepening our collaboration with all of you.

Thank you for your attention.

## Appendix XII

### Statement made by Mr Dimitrios Mantzos, Chairperson of PACE Sub-Committee on Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings

As a chairperson of PACE Sub-Committee on Migrant Smuggling and on Trafficking in Human Beings, I would like to stress the importance of keeping in mind the vulnerability of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to forms of exploitation along migration routes. The Sub-Committee of the Migration Committee covers both the issue of smuggling of migrants and that of trafficking in human beings in the context of migration: these two crimes, albeit distinguished in nature, can be closely intertwined as we know. Our Assembly adopted, last October, a Resolution and a Recommendation to the Committee of Ministers on "A shared European approach to address migrant smuggling". Articles 7 and 8 of Resolution 2568(2024) posit notably that the crime of migrant smuggling is not equal in nature to irregular border crossing. The need for international protection of each person should be examined in a fair and individualised manner. The Resolution further encourages States not to impose penalties on individuals who are coerced into committing an illegal act pursuant to Article 26 of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings ([CETS No. 197](#)). Therefore, last October, the Assembly invited States to clarify that people in need of protection should never be criminalised or administratively sanctioned for crossing a border unauthorised pursuant to Article 31 of the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and Article 26 of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. This position has been taken on board by the Committee of Ministers in the framework of its work towards the adoption of a Recommendation on combatting and preventing the smuggling of migrants. Last but not least, the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Asylum Seekers of PACE is closely monitoring the development of border procedures, including as part of the enactment of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. The importance of identifying and protecting victims of trafficking as well as preventing migrants and refugees from falling prey to such crime is one remains a central issue which the Committee is looking at.