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

30th meeting of the Committee of the Parties

(Strasbourg, 17 June 2022)

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 30th meeting on 17 June 2022 in Strasbourg. The meeting was held in a hybrid format, with some members participating online via the platform KUDO. Pending the election of a Chair, the meeting was opened and chaired by the Executive Secretary.

Agenda item 2: Adoption of the draft agenda

2. The Chair invited the Committee to adopt the draft agenda of the meeting. The agenda, as adopted by the Committee, is set out in Appendix I. The list of participants is set out in Appendix II.

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

3. The Executive Secretary recalled that the term of office of the Chair and the Vice-Chair was one year and could be renewed once. She informed the Committee that the Secretariat had received an expression of interest from Ambassador Christian Meuwly (Switzerland) to continue as Chair of the Committee for a second term of office. No other candidates for the Chair were proposed. The Committee elected Ambassador Meuwly as its Chair by acclamation for a second term of office of one year.

4. Ambassador Meuwly thanked the Committee for the confidence placed in him and stated that he would continue to promote the Convention and its effective implementation.

5. The Chair invited members to elect a new Vice-Chair of the Committee, following the expiry of the first term of office of Ambassador Marie Fontanel (France). He indicated that Ambassador Maria Spassova (Bulgaria) had expressed interest in assuming this role. No other candidates were proposed. The Committee elected Ambassador Maria Spassova as its Vice-Chair by acclamation for a first term of office of one year.

6. Ambassador Spassova also thanked the Committee for the confidence placed in her and stated that she would do her utmost to support the work of the Committee.

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

7. The Chair noted that no new signatures and/or ratifications had been submitted since the last meeting of the Committee in December 2021. He recalled that Israel had acceded to the Convention in 2021, and gave the floor to Ms Dina Dominitz, the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator of Israel.

8. Ms Dominitz referred to a recent event organised in Israel to celebrate the accession of Israel to the Convention, in the presence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Justice. She noted that Israel was very proud to be the first non-European State to join the Convention, considered as the most advanced tool in combatting human trafficking. Further, she underlined the importance of strengthening co-operation with the international community to successfully combat human trafficking.

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

9. 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.

10. Ms Gayer began by drawing attention to the fertile ground created by the war in Ukraine for organised criminal groups and individual profiteers to target vulnerable individuals. She indicated that although the level of awareness-raising on trafficking related to the war in Ukraine was very high compared to other humanitarian crises, gaps remained due to limited capacity to deliver. In that context, she referred to GRETA's

Guidance Note providing practical advice to help States Parties ensure that public agencies, NGOs, the private sector and the general public minimise the risks of human trafficking created by the war in Ukraine.

11. Furthermore, the President of GRETA highlighted the main findings from GRETA's third evaluation round reports concerning Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Latvia, Norway and Portugal, which were the subject of draft recommendations by the Committee of the Parties at the meeting. These reports documented advancements in the legislation, policy and practice in the six countries concerned, but at the same time showed that there were several persistent gaps in the implementation of certain provisions of the Convention, in particular in terms of effective access to compensation for victims of trafficking. Ms Gayer further informed the Committee that in 2022, GRETA had already carried out six evaluation visits (to Greece, North Macedonia, Serbia, Poland, Slovenia and Estonia), and was planning to conduct six more visits before the end of the year (to Spain, Azerbaijan, Netherlands, Sweden, Iceland and Italy). However, the visit to Ukraine, which was on this year's calendar, would most probably have to be postponed.

12. Ms Gayer noted that GRETA had released a new report on online and technology-facilitated trafficking in human beings which explores the operational and legal challenges that State Parties face, as well as good practices, and provides recommendations on how to better combat technology-facilitated trafficking, enhance co-operation with private companies, and strengthen international co-operation. The text of Ms Gayer's presentation is set out in Appendix III.

Agenda item 6: Examination of GRETA's reports on the implementation of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Latvia, Norway and Portugal (third evaluation round) and adoption of recommendations in respect of these Parties

13. The Chair of the Committee, Ambassador Meuwly, noted that GRETA had adopted six more final reports under the third evaluation round of implementation of the Convention, concerning Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Latvia, Norway and Portugal. These reports, except for the report concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina, had already been made public. The six draft recommendations based on these reports had been made available to the Committee and members of the Committee had been invited to send any proposals for amendments by 13 June 2022. The Secretariat had not received any proposals for amendments to the draft recommendations in advance of the meeting. The Chair noted that the six draft recommendations followed the model of recommendations under the third evaluation round, setting a two-year deadline for informing the Committee of the Parties of the measures taken.

6.1 Draft recommendation to be adopted in respect of Armenia

14. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Armenia.

15. Ms Viktoria Melkumova, Third Secretary of the Division on Co-operation with International Monitoring Bodies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, expressed her government's appreciation that the progress achieved by the Armenian authorities in implementing the Convention had been acknowledged in GRETA's report. In addition, she highlighted some of the legal provisions and measures in place to prevent and combat human trafficking as well as to identify and assist its victims. The full text of Ms Melkumova's statement appears in Appendix IV.

16. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Armenia and decided to request the Armenian Government to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 17 June 2024.

6.2 Draft recommendation to be adopted in respect of Bosnia and Herzegovina

17. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina.

18. Ms Dragana Kremenovic-Kusmuk, Deputy Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina, noted that her country had already taken a number of measures and achieved progress in implementing the Convention. However, further improvement was needed in order to strengthen the criminal justice response to human trafficking and ensure victims' effective access to justice. In that context, she underlined the importance of the EU and CoE Joint Programme Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey. Further, she stated that the Council of Europe Action Plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022-2025 addresses the issues highlighted in GRETA's report, especially compensation of victims of human trafficking.

19. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Bosnia and Herzegovina and decided to request the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 17 June 2024.

6.3 Draft recommendation to be adopted in respect of France

20. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning France.

21. Ms Elisabeth Moiron-Braud, Secretary General of the Interministerial task-force on combating violence against women and human trafficking (MIPROF), congratulated GRETA on the quality of the report, and expressed her country's readiness to continue strengthening the implementation of the Convention. She provided an update on developments that had taken place after GRETA's visit to France. In particular, in November 2021, the French government had launched a National Acceleration Strategy to Eliminate Child Labour, Forced Labour, Human Trafficking and Contemporary Slavery and France became a leader of the Alliance 8.7, a global partnership against child labour, forced labour, human trafficking and contemporary slavery. In October 2021, the first specialised shelter for accommodating child victims of trafficking had been opened. Further, the first action plan against the prostitution of children was adopted on 15 November 2021. In addition, Ms Moiron-Braud noted that France had stepped up its efforts to prevent human trafficking through measures aimed at discouraging demand for sexual services provided by victims of trafficking. Lastly, she referred to the preventive measures taken to protect people fleeing the war in Ukraine from human trafficking.

22. Mr Mark Gorey, Deputy to the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, expressed his appreciation and gratitude for the efforts made by the French authorities to welcome and support refugees fleeing Ukraine. Ms Johanna Palm, Deputy to the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands, also thanked the representatives of France and underlined the importance of the close inter-state co-operation for preventing and combating human trafficking.

23. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of France and decided to request the French Government to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 17 June 2024.

6.4 Draft recommendation to be adopted in respect of Latvia

24. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Latvia.

25. Ms Agnese Zile-Veisberga, Senior Expert from the Sectoral Policy Department of the Ministry of the Interior, expressed her gratitude to GRETA for the third evaluation report and noted that the Latvian authorities were fully committed to translating the recommendations into future action. She noted that Latvia had already made significant progress in seizing criminal assets of traffickers with a view to compensating victims of human trafficking, but further improvement was needed. She informed the Committee of a project funded by the EU Commission through which the police officers would be trained on the use of special investigation techniques as well as of the setting up of a support system for child victims of trafficking. She further informed the Committee that a review of the legal provisions on the recovery and reflection period in order to comply with Article 13 of the Convention was on the agenda.

26. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Latvia and decided to request the Latvian Government to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 17 June 2024.

6.5 Draft recommendation to be adopted in respect of Norway

27. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Norway.

28. Mr Jan Austad, Senior Adviser at the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, who joined the meeting online, thanked GRETA and the Secretariat for the good co-operation during the third evaluation round. He informed the Committee that the Minister of Justice and Public Security had requested the Inter-Ministerial Working Group against Human Trafficking to start implementing GRETA's recommendations. He expressed his appreciation on the co-operation between the Council of Europe (GRETA) and the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, but highlighted the need to better co-ordinate the visits conducted by these two organisations in order not to put too much pressure on the national authorities.

29. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Norway and decided to request the Norwegian Government to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 17 June 2024.

6.6 Draft recommendation to be adopted in respect of Portugal

30. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Portugal.

31. Mr Manuel Albano, National Rapporteur for Trafficking in Human Beings, informed the Committee that almost all the recommendations of GRETA would be addressed in the next national action plan, which should be released within two months. He noted that Portugal had quickly reacted to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and had taken action to mitigate the risks of human trafficking. Leaflets had immediately been distributed in all the relevant places across the country. In addition, the multidisciplinary team on combating human trafficking is part of the Task Force on Ukraine. Mr Albano informed the Committee that no human trafficking case had been confirmed so far among people fleeing the war in Ukraine due to quick reaction of the European States to protect them from human trafficking.

32. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Portugal and decided to request the Portuguese Government to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 17 June 2024.

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

33. 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 Monaco, in the context of the combined first and second evaluation round of the Convention, the Government of San Marino, in the context of the second evaluation round of the Convention, and the Governments of Austria, Cyprus and the Slovak Republic, in the context of the third evaluation round of the Convention. The Czech authorities had apologised for the delay in providing their report. The Chair invited the representatives of the countries concerned to take the floor concerning their authorities' replies to the Committee of the Parties' recommendations.

7.1. Czech Republic

34. On behalf of the Czech Republic, Mr Adam Gazda of the International Co-operation and EU Department of the Ministry of Justice, thanked the Secretariat for the organisation of a roundtable on the follow-up to GRETA's report and the Committee of the Parties' recommendation in Prague in November 2021. He noted that some of the recommendations were reflected in the 2023 national strategy for combating

human trafficking, and that the report on the implementation of the recommendations would be submitted in the upcoming weeks. The full text of Mr Gazda's statement appears in Appendix V.

7.2. Monaco

35. Mr Gabriel Revel, Deputy Permanent Representative of Monaco, informed the Committee of the preparation of an interservice plan of coordination of action against human trafficking, involving representatives of several relevant ministries, such as the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of National Education, and Ministry of the Interior, that would soon be published.

36. The Chair invited GRETA's President to provide comments on the information presented. Ms Gayer noted that GRETA had not had the opportunity to discuss the report submitted by the Monegasque Government. Ms Gayer stated that according to that report steps had been taken to develop training and a working group had been set up to prepare a circular to improve the co-ordination among the relevant services in the field of detection and support of victims of human trafficking, but there was no progress on the introduction of the recovery and reflection period in national law.

7.3. San Marino

37. Ambassador Eros Gasperoni, Permanent Representative of San Marino to the Council of Europe, began by congratulating the President and the Vice-President of the Committee of the Parties on their election. He noted that since no case of human trafficking exists in San Marino, it is difficult to sensitise the general public to the phenomenon of human trafficking. Nevertheless, San Marino would strive to gradually implement all the recommendations of GRETA. He presented his apologies for the late submission of San Marino's report, which was because of the COVID-19 crisis and the small size of the state administration.

38. GRETA's President noted that San Marino had submitted its report with a delay of over two years. She indicated that the report contains information on the training provided and the measures taken to support Ukrainian citizens fleeing the war. Nevertheless, no national action plan has been adopted, nor any awareness-raising activities have been organised.

7.4. Austria

39. Ms Katharina Enzesberger, Deputy Permanent Representative of Austria, noted that several GRETA recommendations had been implemented, especially those concerning victims' access to compensation, legal aid, and recovery and reflection period, while some other recommendations are more difficult to be implemented as they require constitutional changes.

40. GRETA's President noted that progress had been made in some areas, such as a new working group in the task force on combating human trafficking had been set up. However, the recovery and reflection period is still not enshrined in law and no progress has been recorded on the setting up of a formalised national referral mechanism.

7.5. Cyprus

41. Mr Kostas Psevdiotis, Deputy Permanent Representative of Cyprus, started by extending his Government's appreciation to the members of GRETA and the Secretariat for their comprehensive evaluation in the third evaluation round and the recommendations to further strengthen his country's response to prevent and combat human trafficking. He stated that the round-table meeting held in May 2022 in Nicosia as a follow-up to GRETA's report and the Committee of the Parties recommendation was a very good opportunity to take stock and discuss ways forward. He referred to several developments that had taken place following GRETA's evaluation, including Cyprus' participation in the OSCE Pilot Project on financial investigation into trafficking in human beings, an internet platform set up by the Cyprus Police where information regarding human trafficking can be submitted anonymously, and a Memorandum of Co-operation

signed in January 2022 between the Ministry of Justice and Public Order and the Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare for the referral of victims of trafficking. He also informed the Committee that the issue of state compensation and compensation to victims during the criminal proceedings was under examination in order to establish improved procedures in favour of victims. The full text of Mr Psevdiotis' statement appears in Appendix VI.

42. The President of GRETA noted that according to the report submitted by the authorities, a number of positive steps had been taken in the area of assistance to victims of trafficking and legislative amendments had been drafted on the recovery and reflection period. However, there was still no state compensation scheme accessible by victims of trafficking.

7.6. Slovak Republic

43. No representative of the Slovak Republic was present at the meeting. The President of GRETA stated that the Slovak Republic had submitted a very detailed report covering all the conclusions of GRETA and providing a detailed account of the progress made by the authorities. However, there are still areas for further improvement. For example, the project funded by the EU for the creation of special rooms to interview victims had been delayed due to the Covid pandemic and no legislative change had been made with regard to recovery and reflection period.

44. At the end of the presentations of Government reports in response to Committee of the Parties' recommendations, the Chair noted with concern that, in some cases, little or no progress had been made to implement certain recommendations made repeatedly by GRETA and the Committee of the Parties since the first evaluation some 10 years ago. He suggested that the Committee of the Parties should consider adopting a procedure for monitoring the implementation of the recommendations in case of continued non-implementation, and asked the Secretariat to prepare a proposal for such a procedure, in consultation with Committee members, for the next meeting of the Committee.

Agenda item 8: Exchange of views with Ms Leyla Kayacik, Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees

45. The Chair welcomed Ms Leyla Kayacik, who was appointed as the new Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees on 18 December 2021. He informed the Committee that Ms Kayacik had recently conducted visits to countries neighbouring or close to Ukraine that had received significant numbers of people fleeing the war in Ukraine and gave her the floor to inform the Committee of her activities.

46. Ms Kayacik began her presentation by commending Council of Europe member states for having expanded the focus of Council of Europe action plan on migration to cover all vulnerable persons in the context of migration and asylum, while continuing activities to protect the rights of migrant and refugee children, including those who are victims or potential victims of human trafficking. She also praised GRETA's Guidance Note on the entitlement of victims of trafficking, and persons at risk of being trafficked, to international protection, published in June 2020, as a very valuable tool in a migration and asylum context.

47. Furthermore, Ms Kayacik informed the Committee of a number of activities she had carried out with the aim of exchanging information, enhancing synergies and determining how best the Council of Europe can complement the ongoing efforts to address the needs of vulnerable persons fleeing Ukraine. These include the extraordinary meeting of the Council of Europe's Network of Focal Points on Migration held on 9 March 2022, and an online meeting with international organisations on 8 April 2022. In addition, Ms Kayacik had carried out fact-finding visits to the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, Poland and the Republic of Moldova. In this regard, she underlined the excellent co-operation with the Anti-Trafficking Secretariat and expressed her gratitude for Ms Ia Dadunashvili, member of GRETA, who participated in the visits to three of these countries in order to provide expertise on anti-trafficking issues. The focus of the visits was to assess the situation and the needs on the ground as regards the challenges that the crisis in Ukraine has created, so

that the Council of Europe can be of help in addressing them. She indicated that in all the countries she had visited, issues such as accommodation, access to labour market, education, healthcare and language integration were becoming more and more pressing. As an example of the support that can be provided, she noted that the Council of Europe had launched a pilot initiative in the Republic of Moldova on psychological trauma rehabilitation for women and children affected by the war in Ukraine. There is also a plan to launch in September a project on "Strengthening the human rights protection of refugees and migrants in the Republic of Moldova". The full text of Ms Kayacik's intervention appears in Appendix VII.

48. The Chair thanked Ms Kayacik for her presentation and gave the floor to the members and participants of the Committee for questions or comments.

49. The representative of the Republic of Moldova welcomed the CoE project on "Strengthening the human rights protection of refugees and migrants in the Republic of Moldova" and emphasised that it should include capacity building activities in relation to trafficking in human beings.

50. The representative of Monaco underlined that Monaco had made a voluntary contribution of 50.000 euros to the mandate of Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees and invited other States parties to do the same given the importance of her mandate.

51. Ms Elisabeth Moiron-Braud, Secretary General of MIPROF (France), informed the Committee of the measures taken to address risks of trafficking in human beings in relation to the war in Ukraine, notably awareness-raising initiatives of vulnerable refugees and relevant professionals, which have proven to be effective and should serve as an example to address risks of trafficking of refugees of other nationalities.

52. The Representative of the Czech Republic thanked Ms Kayacik for her recent visit to the Czech Republic and the efforts to support national capacities in the reception of refugees from Ukraine.

53. Ms Kayacik thanked the representatives of member States for their support to the mandate of Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees. She expressed the wish to continue the close cooperation with GRETA and the Committee of Parties, and the Chair suggested that such an exchange of views could take place on an annual basis.

Agenda item 9: Information on activities aimed at strengthening the implementation of GRETA's conclusions and the Committee of the Parties' recommendations

54. The Chair gave the floor to the Executive Secretary to update the Committee on co-operation activities.

55. The Executive Secretary informed the Committee of the recent organisation of three round-table meetings, in Austria, the Slovak Republic and Cyprus, to discuss progress in the implementation of the recommendations made by GRETA and the Committee of the Parties in the context of the third round of evaluation of the Convention. Similar round-table meetings are planned to take place in Albania and the Republic of Moldova in September 2022. Further, the Executive Secretary referred to the four ongoing co-operation projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Turkey and Serbia, funded under the Horizontal Facility II, a joint programme of the Council of Europe and the European Union, noting that a decision had been taken to continue the projects in North Macedonia and Serbia under the Horizontal Facility III. As regards Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey, alternative funding would have to be found to enable the continuation of the projects. She also referred to an ongoing project funded by the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM) of the European Commission to assist the Maltese authorities in the preparation of a new national strategy on combating human trafficking. Lastly, she informed the Committee that a regional conference on human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation in the Western Balkans is scheduled on 21-22 September 2022 in Belgrade. She underlined that, in addition to country-by-country initiatives, such regional conferences are of paramount importance as they bring together

several countries facing similar challenges, foster co-operation between them and allow for the exchange of good practices.

Agenda item 10: Information on the anti-trafficking activities of other Council of Europe bodies and international organisations of interest to the Committee of the Parties

56. The Chair invited participants and observers to provide relevant information.

57. Ms Diana Stoica, Chairperson of the PACE Sub-Committee on Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings, informed the Committee that on 20 June 2022, on the occasion of the World Refugee Day, the Sub-Committee had planned to hold an exchange of views with Ms Diane Schmitt, Anti-Trafficking Coordinator of the European Commission, and Ms Leyla Kayacik, Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on Migration and Refugees. The Sub-Committee also envisages to conduct fact-finding missions in some countries.

58. Mr Harald Bergmann, Spokesperson on Human Rights of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (who joined the meeting online) underlined the forefront role played by cities and regions in relation to trafficking in human beings as they are often the first contact with (potential) victims. In 2017 and 2018, the Congress issued several reports on the role of cities and regions in relation to the reception and integration of refugees which underline that women and children are particularly at risk of becoming victims of abuses such as sexual violence, human trafficking or disappearance. With regard to current activities, the Congress is preparing a report on the reception of women and children refugees in Europe's cities and regions that will be presented for adoption at its autumn session with a view to providing support and guidance to local and regional authorities across Europe. In this framework, a delegation of the Congress will carry out a visit to Poland on 4 and 5 July 2022 to collect experiences of Polish cities in taking care of Ukrainian refugees. The full text of Mr Bergmann's intervention appears in Appendix VII.

59. The Executive Secretary informed the Committee of the recent annual meeting of National Anti-trafficking Co-ordinators and Rapporteurs, organised jointly by the Council of Europe and the OSCE on 13-14 June 2022 in Vienna. The meeting had focused on technology-facilitated trafficking and the risks of trafficking stemming from the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. The Executive Secretary stressed the importance of the close co-operation between the Council of Europe and the OSCE in order to avoid duplication.

Agenda item 11: Dates of future meetings

60. The Committee decided to hold its next meeting on 25 November 2022.

Agenda item 12: Other business

Agenda item 13: Adoption of the list of decisions taken

61. The list of decisions appears in Appendix IX.

Appendix I Agenda

- 1. Opening of the meeting**
- 2. Adoption of the draft agenda**
- 3. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee of the Parties**
- 4. State of signatures and ratifications of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings**
- 5. Exchange of views with the President of GRETA**
- 6. Examination of GRETA's reports on the implementation of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Latvia, Norway and Portugal (third evaluation round) and adoption of recommendations in respect of these Parties**
 - 7.1. Armenia**
 - 7.2. Bosnia and Herzegovina**
 - 7.3. France**
 - 7.4. Latvia**
 - 7.5. Norway**
 - 7.6. Portugal**
- 7. Government reports submitted in reply to Committee of the Parties recommendations**

First evaluation round

 - 7.1. Czech Republic**

First/second evaluation round

 - 7.2. Monaco**

Third evaluation round

 - 7.3. Austria**
 - 7.4. Cyprus**
 - 7.5. Slovak Republic**
- 8. Exchange of views with Ms Leyla Kayacik, Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees**
- 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. 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

ALBANIA / ALBANIE

Ms Sidita Gjipali
Deputy to the Permanent Representative
to the Council of Europe

ANDORRA / ANDORRE

M. Joan Forner Rovira (*online / en ligne*)
Ambassadeur Extraordinaire et Plénipotentiaire
Représentant Permanent
auprès du Conseil de l'Europe

ARMENIA / ARMÉNIE

Ms Viktoria Melkumova
Third Secretary of the Division of Cooperation with
International Monitoring Bodies
Department of Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

AUSTRIA / AUTRICHE

Ms Katharina Enzesberger
Deputy to the Permanent Representative
to the Council of Europe

AZERBAIJAN / AZERBAÏDJAN

Mr Tale Aliyev
Deputy to the Permanent Representative
to the Council of Europe

BELARUS/ BÉLARUS

Mr Nikita Belenchenko
Head of the mission of Belarus
to the Council of Europe

BELGIUM / BELGIQUE

Mr Jean-François Minet (*online / en ligne*)
Attaché
Ministry of Justice
General Directorate Legislation, Civil Liberties and
Fundamental Rights
Criminal Policy Service
Organised Crime Unit
Trafficking and smuggling in human beings

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA/BOSNIE- HERZEGOVINE

Ms Dragana Kremenovic-Kusmuk
Deputy Permanent Representative
to the Council of Europe

BULGARIA / BULGARIE

Ms Maria Spassova
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
to the Council of Europe

CROATIA / CROATIE

Ms Narcisa Bećirević
Deputy to the Permanent Representative
to the Council of Europe

CYPRUS / CHYPRE

Mr Kostas Psevdiotis
Deputy Permanent Representative
to the Council of Europe

Ms Tania Charalambidou (*online / en ligne*)
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Ministry of the Interior

CZECH REPUBLIC / RÉPUBLIQUE TCHÈQUE

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Deputy Permanent Representative
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Mr Adam Gazda
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FINLAND / FINLANDE**FRANCE**

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 Ambassadrice
 Représentante Permanente
 auprès du Conseil de l'Europe

M. Léopold Stefanini
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Mme Elisabeth Moiron-Braud
 Secrétaire générale
 Mission interministérielle pour la protection des
 femmes contre les violences et la lutte contre la traite
 des êtres humains

Mme Carla Perreti
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 femmes contre les violences et la lutte contre la traite
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Ms Ana Ivanishvili (*online / en ligne*)
 Acting Head of Public International Law Department
 Ministry of Justice of Georgia

GERMANY / ALLEMAGNE

Ms Iris Muth (*participation online / en ligne*)
 Head of Division
 Division 402 – Combating Trafficking in Human Beings
 and Prostitute Protection Act
 Federal Ministry for Family Affairs,
 Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

GREECE / GRECE

M. Georgios Skemperis
 Adjoint au Représentant Permanent
 auprès du Conseil de l'Europe

Mr Lazaros Kozaris (*online / en ligne*)
 Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in
 Human Beings
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs

HUNGARY / HONGRIE

Mr Márton Berkes
 Senior Officer, Anti-Trafficking Expert
 Ministry of Interior

ICELAND / ISLANDE

Ms Cécile Chevalier Laignel
 Executive Assistant
 Permanent Representation
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Appendix III

Statement by Ms Helga GAYER, President of GRETA

Mr Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to participate in the traditional exchange with the Committee of the Parties.

Since our last exchange in December last year, war and a new humanitarian crisis in Europe have created a fertile ground for organised criminal groups and individual profiteers to target vulnerable individuals. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has provoked the largest displacement of people in Europe since the Second World War, with more than 14 million of people being forced to flee their homes, half of them seeking refuge in other countries. Very quickly after the beginning of the war, NGOs and journalists sounded the alarm over suspected cases of human trafficking. In a statement issued on 17 March 2022, GRETA [called on States to act urgently to protect people fleeing Ukraine from human trafficking](#). Commendable steps have been taken by governments, international organisations and civil society to protect Ukrainian refugees. Official and safe legal routes were established for people fleeing the conflict in Ukraine, as a result of the activation of the European Union Directive on temporary protection, and countries outside the EU also rapidly activated their own set of protection measures, which is essential to mitigate the risks of trafficking. We must positively acknowledge that the level of awareness-raising on trafficking related to the war in Ukraine is very high compared to other humanitarian crises. Nevertheless, gaps remain due to limited capacity to deliver. On 4 May 2022, GRETA issued a [Guidance Note](#) providing practical advice to help States Parties ensure that public agencies, NGOs, the private sector and the general public minimise the risks of human trafficking created by the war in Ukraine. The Guidance note was publicised in a webinar organised on 25 May together with the Freedom Fund and La Strada International.

The actions needed to prevent and mitigate the risks of trafficking stemming from the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine were among the topics of the **meeting of National Anti-trafficking Coordinators and Rapporteurs** which was co-organised by the Council of Europe and the OSCE earlier this week. So far, the number of confirmed cases of human trafficking in relation to the war in Ukraine remains low, which may be a sign of success of the early preventive measures taken. However, one must be cautious with such assessment. Trafficking in human beings has always been considered as an "invisible crime" and the use of new technologies to facilitate trafficking makes it even more difficult to detect. The social and economic vulnerabilities of the millions of people affected by the war in Ukraine are likely to increase as time goes. As stressed by GRETA, co-ordinated action and rapid exchange of information at national and international level are crucial to prevent trafficking and detect potential victims.

On 6-10 June, GRETA carried out its third evaluation visit to Poland (which has received the largest number of people fleeing the war in Ukraine). Although the visit dealt primarily with issues related to the third evaluation round, it also provided an opportunity to visit one of the crossing points on the border with Ukraine (Medyka) and witness the efforts made, including the preventive measures aimed at raising awareness of the risks of human trafficking and protecting vulnerable individuals. A member of GRETA also participated in the fact-finding missions of the Secretary General's Special Representative on Migration and Refugees to the Czech Republic, Slovakia and the Republic of Moldova, and you will hear more about this later today from Ms Leyla Kayacik.

Since our last exchange of views in December, GRETA has published final reports on **Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Latvia, Norway and Portugal**, in the context of the third evaluation round of the Anti-Trafficking Convention, which are the subject of draft recommendations that have been submitted to you for consideration and adoption at today's meeting. Allow me to briefly refer to some of the main findings of GRETA from these reports.

The six reports document advancements in the legislation, policy and practice in the six countries concerned. Nevertheless, there are several persistent gaps. For example, effective **access to compensation** for victims of trafficking is one of the most challenging issues. The number of victims of human trafficking who have obtained compensation from the perpetrators or the State is low. Therefore, GRETA urged the six countries concerned to make additional efforts to guarantee effective access to compensation. The efforts should include, among others, making full use of the existing legislation on the freezing and forfeiture of assets, ensuring that the collection of evidence about the harm the victim has suffered is part of the criminal investigation, providing legal support for victims to file compensation claims, and strengthening the training legal professionals. Additionally, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is still no state compensation scheme accessible to victims of trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The **low number of convictions** for human trafficking is another concern raised by GRETA in these reports. Trafficking cases are complex crimes, frequently with a transnational dimension, often involving multiple victims and perpetrators, and may include many other offences. Lack of resources and prioritisation contribute to low prosecution and conviction rates of perpetrators. The quick return of victims to their countries of origin is another factor which impacts the authorities' ability to prosecute traffickers. GRETA has asked the national authorities of all the six countries to take additional steps to ensure that cases of trafficking are investigated proactively and prosecuted effectively, leading to effective, proportionate and dissuasive sentences.

Mr Chair, as you know from the previous meetings, GRETA has paid particular attention to the use of **information and communication technology** (ICT) to commit human trafficking offences. On 18 March, we released a new [report](#) on online and technology-facilitated trafficking in human beings. This report analyses information collected through questionnaires sent to the 48 state parties to the Convention, civil society organisations and tech companies. The report explores the operational and legal challenges that State Parties face, as well as good practices, and provides recommendations on how to enhance the detection, investigation and prosecution of technology-facilitated trafficking, enhance co-operation with private companies, and strengthen international co-operation. We are keen to build on the findings and recommendations of the report and provide support to member States to increase their capacity in this respect. The discussion of policy initiatives to combat technology-facilitated trafficking was also among the topics on the agenda of the recent meeting of National Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinators and Rapporteurs which I already referred to.

Another important development that I would like to refer to is the process of preparing a **draft recommendation on combating trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation**. GRETA was actively involved in the drafting process, entrusted to DH-TET, and I am glad to learn that this week the Steering Committee on Human Rights (CDDH) approved that draft text and will be transmitting it to the Committee of Ministers for adoption. I cannot overstate the relevance of this recommendation, including in the context of the humanitarian crisis provoked by the war in Ukraine. We know that trafficking for labour exploitation is facilitated by, among other things, armed conflicts resulting in displacement of people, failure to uphold economic and social human rights, and lack of effective labour market regulations and inspection mechanisms.

As regards **GRETA's programme of activities**, so far this year GRETA has carried out six evaluation visits (to Greece, North Macedonia, Serbia, Poland, Slovenia and Estonia), and a visit to Spain is scheduled for early July. Visits to Azerbaijan, Netherlands, Sweden, Iceland and Italy are being prepared for the autumn. We are thus very much on track with our programme of visits. However, the visit to Ukraine, which is on this year's calendar, will most probably have to be postponed.

At its forthcoming meeting (27 June - 1 July), GRETA will hold exchanges of views with the UN Special Representative on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Prof. Siobhan Mullally, as well as with the Chair of ADI-ROM. GRETA will hold an additional three-day meeting in September during which it intends to start the process of reflection on the focus of the fourth evaluation round of the Convention.

GRETA could not have performed this intensive programme of activities (which has been increased by the ongoing humanitarian crisis) without the temporary reinforcement of the Secretariat as a result of the relocation of the unspent budget of the previous years.

Thank you for your attention.

Appendix IV

Statement by Ms Viktoria Melkumova, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Armenia

On 15 July 2019, GRETA launched the 3rd round of evaluation of the Convention against Trafficking in Human Beings in respect of Armenia. The Draft Final Report was approved by GRETA in November 2021 and was submitted to the Armenian authorities for comments. Comments were sent by authorities in time and were taken into account by GRETA during adoption of the Final Report in Strasbourg at the end of March 2022. The report covers the situation up to 1 April 2022. Recommendations received within Final Report have been transmitted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia to the Government via Anti-Trafficking Council, which is an acting national mechanism. Information on the implementation of the recommendations will be communicated to GRETA in due time (by 17 June 2024).

Armenia is pleased with the welcome message by GRETA on the measures taken and progress achieved by the Armenian authorities in implementing the Convention, and in particular with regard to:

- the further development of the legislative framework relevant to action against trafficking in human beings (THB), including amendments to the Law on Identification and Support to Persons Subjected to Trafficking in Human Beings and the adoption of a new Criminal Code with amended provisions on THB;
- the amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure and the training provided on child-sensitive procedures when investigating, prosecuting and adjudicating cases of THB;
- the adoption of a new National Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for the period 2020-2022;
- the setting up of a new Health Inspection Body, with an additional 60 labour inspectors, and its inclusion as a member of the Anti-Trafficking Working Group;
- the engagement in international co-operation in the fight against trafficking in human beings.

Along with the adoption of the Final Report of the 3rd round, the Government of the Republic of Armenia received from GRETA Draft Recommendation. There were no amendments by Armenia to the Draft Recommendation. During the 30th meeting of the Committee of the Parties to the Convention, held in Strasbourg on 17 June 2022, the Armenian representative has communicated to the Committee and transmitted Armenian Government views/comments on the Draft Recommendation. They are the following:

- According to the Law on Identification and Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking and Exploitation:
 - all potential foreign victims, victims and victims of a special category have the right to consideration. This right is granted along with the launching of the pre-identification phase;
 - assistance is provided to victims of trafficking regardless a cooperation with the authorities;
 - the law defines the types and procedure of assistance provided to victims of trafficking;
 - potential victims are informed about their rights in a comprehensible language. Translation services are provided if needed.
- The Law on Employment of the Republic of Armenia gives regulations aimed at increasing of the access to the labour market, employment opportunities for victims of trafficking;

-
- Police of the Republic of Armenia do not prioritize only the explanations of the victims or witnesses. Whenever it is possible, the Police takes various operative and investigative measures that can be used as an evidence;
 - In order to stop, to research and to detect fake or doubtful job offers by individuals or organizations, the Police of Armenia regularly monitor the Internet and social networks;
 - The new Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia, that will enter into force on 1 July 2022 defines exploitation of another person as forced prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or the provision of services or illegal activities, enslavement or slavery, the purchase or sale of a cell, organ, tissue or biological material or fluid.

Appendix V

Statement by Mr Adam Gazda, International Co-operation and EU Department, Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic

Thank you, Mr Chair, and good morning everybody,

First, this delegation would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the Chairmanship of this Committee and wish you every success in your future endeavours. The same applies to our new Vice-Chairwoman.

I would like to thank GRETA, on behalf of the Czech Republic, for their cooperation and for the recommendations and comments they formulated during the evaluation of the Czech Republic and their recent country visit. That took place in November last year in Prague in a form of a roundtable during which the interest of our stakeholders in the assistance of GRETA and in its further proposals was reflected. The GRETA's report and the recommendations contained therein thus form a solid base for further improvement of our activities towards eliminating human trafficking and towards full implementation of the Convention.

The participants of the roundtable drew attention to several issues which are also mentioned in the recommendations themselves, such as further engagement of private sector and due diligence of supply chains. In this regard, the Czech Republic adheres to the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. The guidelines are promoted by the National Contact Point whose main focus is on multinational business. Furthermore, recent changes in the national Employment Act have introduced user's co-responsibility in cases of employment intermediation and an obligation to register all employment relationships without exception.

A part of the recommendations is also reflected in the National Strategy for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings for the years 2020 to 2023. To mention some, the Strategy focuses on prevention and identification in socially excluded localities, and as such strives to address the situation of vulnerable persons, including Roma community. It also stresses the importance of training with a focus on identification, and mentions concrete activities aimed at the staff of the Refugee Facilities Administration, Centers for Support of Integration of Foreigners, Labour Inspectorates, Police and other institutions and bodies. Other relevant stakeholders such as NGOs field workers, employees of health-care facilities or asylum officers have also recently taken part in training activities focused on trafficking in human beings.

I would also like to mention that from our point of view there are a few recommendations with which we have already been in compliance. As an example, let me touch upon the non-punishment of victims of the THB which was previously mentioned also by the distinguished delegate from Portugal. The article 26 of the Convention states that the state parties shall provide for the possibility of not imposing penalties on victims for their involvement in unlawful activities to the extent that they have been compelled to do so. This means that the convention requires the possibility of not imposing penalty, it does not require that the victim must always remain unpunished. The Czech law provides for possibilities of not imposing penalties on victims. Particularly relevant is the section 28 of the Czech Criminal Code providing for an extreme necessity as one of the conditions precluding the illegality of an act. Another possibility is foreseen in the sections 46 to 48 of the Criminal Code which provide for the waiver of punishment. Hence, we see here a full compliance with the Article 26 of the Convention.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to take this opportunity to apologize for missing the recent deadline for the submission of our report which was caused by several concurring factors, particularly by the refugee crisis related to the war in Ukraine which made many of the institutions in question busy with other matters, by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemics and also by final preparations of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU which is about to start in 2 weeks from now. We will elaborate further

on mentioned issues as well as on the rest of the recommendations and finalize them in our written response which we will send to the GRETA Secretariat in upcoming weeks.

Thank you for your attention.

Appendix VI

Statement by Mr Kostas Psevdiotis, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Cyprus

Mr Chair,

Allow me to start by extending my Government's appreciation to the members of GRETA and the Secretariat, for their comprehensive evaluation in this third evaluation round and the recommendations to further strengthen my country's response to prevent and combat human trafficking.

The round-table meeting last May in Nicosia, on the implementation of the recommendations was a very good opportunity to take stock and to discuss ways forward.

Over the past years, combating human trafficking has become a priority for the Cypriot Government. As acknowledged in the 2020 Report, several measures and initiatives have been taken and progress has been achieved to address this heinous crime, including through amending the law to raise the penalties and to specifically criminalise the demand for sexual services, introducing the National Referral Mechanism, establishing the Children's House, training government officials and the Judiciary, and funding NGOs to operate shelters or provide other accommodation to victims.

Following your evaluation, several other developments have taken place, such as the following:

- Cyprus participates in the OSCE Pilot Project on financial investigation into trafficking in human beings, which focuses on building upon existing collaboration between the Financial Investigation Unit, reporting entities from the financial sector, mainly Banking Institutions, and law enforcement to identify financial transactions involving proceeds created from sexual and labour exploitation and disseminating data from those transactions to law enforcement authorities.
- Since March 2021, Cyprus Police has been operating a four-digit hotline (1497), which receives anonymous information regarding human trafficking matters. Moreover, the Cyprus Police set up an internet platform where information regarding human trafficking can also be submitted, even anonymously.
- In July 2021 the Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare was established with the aim among others to holistically address the serious issue of trafficking in human beings through a multidisciplinary and coordinated approach in order to enable the development of a set of policies and actions to support victims of trafficking and exploitation.
- In January 2022 the Ministry of Justice & Public Order and the Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare signed a Memorandum of Cooperation between the Police and the Social Welfare Services for the referral, handling, protection and briefing of potential and recognized victims of trafficking. The Memorandum is particularly important as it systematizes and promotes the cooperation of the two sides.
- The capacity of the Labour Inspectorate and the Social Welfare Services has increased drastically.
- During May and June 2022, the National Coordinator promoted a wide-range campaign aiming to reduce demand for sexual services, through audiovisual means, as TV, radio, cinemas, digital and social media.
- The issue of state compensation and compensation to victims during the criminal trial is now under examination in order to establish improved procedures in favour of the victim.

Having said the above, we recognize that there is still more that needs to be done to truly overcome the challenges of human trafficking.

In conclusion, Cyprus remains committed to continue co-operating and collaborating with GRETA, to achieve higher standards in preventing and combating trafficking in human beings.

Thank you for your attention.

Appendix VII

Intervention by Ms Leyla Kayacik, Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees

I would like to start by thanking Ambassador Christian Meuwly, Chair of the Committee of the Parties, and Ms Petya Nestorova, Executive Secretary of Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, as well as President of GRETA, Ms Helga Gayer, for the invitation to have an exchange of views with you today.

I am truly delighted for this opportunity to exchange with the Committee of the Parties to this important Council of Europe Convention.

Of course, the situation regarding Council of Europe's work on migration and asylum has changed considerably this year. Europe is facing the consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine, which has resulted in nearly 7 million people having fled the country, most of them vulnerable women, children and elderly people.

The position of Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees was established in 2016, as a response to the "global migration crisis" in 2015-2016. What was a crisis back then, has since become an important challenge for our member states, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The work of my Office has focused on the most vulnerable migrant and refugees. Following the lessons learnt from the previous Action Plan on refugee and migrant children. Recognising the need to enlarge the CoE focus to other vulnerable persons, the Committee of Ministers adopted a year ago the new Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025).

I commend our member states for having expanded the focus of CoE action on migration, from children alone, to all vulnerable persons in the context of migration and asylum, while of course continuing activities to protect the rights of migrant and refugee children, including those who are victims or potential victims of human trafficking, violence and exploitation. It is of course vital that all children who arrive or have arrived in the territory of a Council of Europe member state are provided with the necessary care and protection, and treated first and foremost, as children.

As you know, the Council of Europe has a rich "package" of relevant human rights standards for the protection of vulnerable persons in the context of migration and asylum, including their vulnerability to human trafficking. The CoE Anti-Trafficking Convention, the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and the work of independent monitoring bodies such as GRETA, all together contribute to tackling this enormous challenge.

GRETA's Guidance Note on the entitlement of victims of trafficking, and persons at risk of being trafficked, to international protection, published in June 2020, is a very valuable tool contributing to the good application of the Anti-Trafficking in a migration and asylum context.

I am also making good use and raising awareness of the latest Guidance Note prepared by GRETA - on addressing the risks of trafficking in human beings related to the war in Ukraine and the ensuing humanitarian crisis, published on 4 May.

Going back to how I have adapted my work to the consequences of the Russian aggression in Ukraine, I would like to inform you that on 9 March 2022 I convened an extraordinary meeting of the Council of Europe's Network of Focal Points on Migration, set up in 2019 and with members appointed by the 46 member states. The main outcome of the meeting was a call to focus on the following issues in which the Council of Europe could provide support to its member states:

- the protection of the most vulnerable persons fleeing Ukraine (women, unaccompanied children, children, and older persons) from abuse, exploitation and human trafficking;
- access to healthcare, including the need to provide psychological support to those fleeing the war;
- the need for linguistic integration, for adults and children;
- the need for access to education and to the labour market;
- and the need to address integration/inclusion into host societies.

These themes are all contained in the current Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025).

The Network held its 5th meeting last week, with the participation of 40 member states, and it included a follow-up of the extraordinary meeting in March, with updated information from member states regarding the situation of people fleeing Ukraine.

In addition, on 17 March 2022, I convened an internal meeting of the CoE's Co-ordination Group on Migration, specially dedicated to sharing information among the different Council of Europe services working on migration-related issues about what is being done and what can be done regarding the situation of people fleeing Ukraine. The meeting addressed a number of possible actions, such as:

- providing member states and NGOs with guidance on existing CoE standards, through outreach and publications, including in a child-friendly manner,
- further developing capacity building activities for authorities and organisations supporting refugees fleeing Ukraine, including through the HELP platform and HELP e-Desks,
- organising psychological support for refugees (adults and children) using existing networks of trainers, and
- adapting and developing cooperation activities to meet the needs arising from the new situation.

On 8 April 2022, I organised an online meeting with international organisations - including representatives of UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), the EU's Agency for Asylum, and OSCE/ODIHR - to exchange information on the actions carried out in the context of the Ukrainian crisis. The aim of the meeting was to enhance synergies and to determine how best the Council of Europe, within its mandate, can complement the ongoing efforts to address the needs of vulnerable persons fleeing Ukraine. This is also part of my mandate: to liaise and exchange information with relevant international organisations and specialised agencies, as well as to co-ordinate the effective implementation of our Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe.

I am also happy to inform you that last month I carried out fact-finding visits to the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic and Poland, and that earlier this week I was in the Republic of Moldova.

And I would like to underline the excellent ongoing co-operation with the Anti-Trafficking Secretariat for having facilitated to include in the delegation of most of my recent visits a member of GRETA: Ms Ia Dadunashvili, who has provided specific expertise on anti-trafficking issues and for which I am extremely grateful.

The focus of all these visits was to assess the situation and the needs on the ground in our member states as regards the challenges that the crisis in Ukraine has created, so that the Council of Europe can be of help in addressing them.

As regards the visits to the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic, carried out on 2-6 May 2022, both countries have made tremendous efforts to host a large number of people fleeing Ukraine, mostly women and children. The reports of these visits will be distributed shortly, and they will include some proposals

for targeted support from the Council of Europe, in close co-operation with our international partners - such as capacity building to enhance psychological support, measures to effectively combat human trafficking and violence against women, and to protect children, especially unaccompanied children, from violence, abuse and going missing, as well as to improve their access to education and linguistic integration.

As regards my visit to Poland (from 30 May to 3 June 2022), the country that has received the highest number of people fleeing the war in Ukraine, they have provided an excellent ad hoc support to all persons seeking shelter and protection.

With the war atrocities continuing, the uncertainty for Ukrainians continues as well. Most Ukrainians would like to return to their homes, and this trend is already increasing as I saw in the Republic of Moldova this week.

In all the countries I have visited, issues such as accommodation, access to labour market, education, healthcare and language integration are becoming more and more pressing as we look at the medium- and longer-term effects. The relevant authorities, in co-operation with civil society and international organisations, are expected to step up their joint and co-ordinated efforts to provide support while remaining vigilant to the risks of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. I have offered the Council of Europe's expertise and technical assistance in this regard, also through the possible financial support of the Council of Europe Development Bank.

As regards my recent visit to the Republic of Moldova this week, and as an example of the support that we can provide, the Council of Europe launched a pilot initiative on psychological trauma rehabilitation for women and children affected by the war in Ukraine.

We are also planning a project in this country, to be launched in September this year, aimed at "Strengthening the human rights protection of refugees and migrants in the Republic of Moldova". The project will include (i) support for the implementation of the legislative, policy and regulatory framework on the human rights protection of refugees and migrants (in line with European and international standards and good practice), (ii) enhancing the capacities of national authorities, the judiciary, legal professionals, educators, social workers and other stakeholders to effectively respond to the needs of refugees and migrants, and (iii) promoting host community resilience and access to rights at the local level (including facilitated access to information and local services).

As you know, over the years the Council of Europe has developed an important "package" of standards and tools addressing the specific vulnerabilities, needs and rights of migrants and refugees, some also in co-operation and with the input of my Office. From the 2019 CM Recommendation "on effective guardianship for unaccompanied and separated children in the context of migration", to a compilation of standards, guidance and practices to promote child-friendly approaches in the field of migration, a Recommendation on support for young refugees in transition to adulthood, and a Handbook on standards and promising practices on family reunification for refugee and migrant children, among others.

More recently, the steering committee on the rights of the child (CDENF), has completed its work to prepare a draft CoE Recommendation on "Human rights principles and implementing guidelines on age assessment for children in migration". The topic of age assessment is also very important for victims of trafficking and this text will soon reach the Committee of Ministers for final adoption. Other new and recent tools include Guidance on family-based care for unaccompanied and separated children and a new CM Recommendation, adopted on 20 May 2022 to protect the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls.

I would like to end my intervention with a few words about the work ahead in the context of the implementation of the new Action Plan of the Council of Europe on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025).

As an illustration of some of the activities included in our Action Plan for 2021-2025 that can be of interest to you, I would like to mention the following:

- Preparation of practical guidance for professionals on the effective identification and referral of vulnerable persons (which includes child and adult victims and potential victims of trafficking), and the need to address vulnerabilities throughout asylum and migration procedures, including reception conditions. We will be working with colleagues across the CoE, including the Anti-Trafficking Secretariat, to produce these key outputs under the new Action Plan.
- Promote international co-operation and investigative strategies in fighting the smuggling of migrants, in application of the CoE Action Plan on this topic (adopted in September 2020), which includes international cooperation to address the links between the smuggling of migrants and human trafficking.
- Organise an exchange of good practices on implementing at national level the Court judgments concerning vulnerability of accompanied and non-accompanied minors and access to asylum.
- Support the national implementation of HELP courses on: asylum and human rights; refugee and migrant children; alternatives to immigration detention; the fight against racism and xenophobia; and radicalisation prevention.

I invite you to continue our good co-operation, in the framework of the new CoE Action Plan for 2021-2025, to further improve the protection of the rights of victims and potential victims of human trafficking – adults and children, women and men - in a context of migration, so that their vulnerabilities are identified and assessed, leading to adequate protection.

Thank you for your attention.

Appendix VIII

Statement by Mr Harald Bergmann (Netherlands, ILDG), Congress Spokesperson on Human Rights

Dear members of the Committee,

Today, as Spokesperson on Human Rights for the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, I would like to emphasise the role of cities and regions in combating and preventing human trafficking.

Local and regional administrations are often the first point of contact for persons facing difficulties and in particular for refugees and migrants arriving in our communities.

This also makes us frontline actors in the fight against human trafficking, and the Congress has developed several reports aimed at helping cities and regions address the issue of human trafficking.

In 2017 and 2018, the Congress prepared reports **on the reception and integration of refugees** and on **unaccompanied refugee children**. Both highlighted the increased danger of women and children becoming victims of abuse, even when they reach “safe” countries.

Today, almost six million Ukrainians, mostly women and children, have had to leave their homes in search of international protection.

Apart from dealing with incredible trauma, people fleeing the war had to watch out for human traffickers looking for victims. They need our protection.

Therefore, the Congress has decided to prepare a report on the reception and protection of women and children refugees in Europe’s towns and regions.

The goal is to look into how local and regional authorities can best address the vulnerabilities and needs of women and children, likely also addressing their increased vulnerability to human trafficking.

A working visit to one of the neighbouring countries of Ukraine will be carried out to gather more information and concrete experiences of cities and regions in the current context.

This report will be presented to the Congress at its 43rd Session in October this year and should help cities and regions in protecting and receiving women and children refugees.

This guidance is highly needed, because as I pointed out, as local and regional authorities we are amongst the first actors who can provide safe refuge and combat trafficking, but we cannot do this alone.

Especially in the current context, with so many vulnerable persons on the move and at risk of falling into the hands of traffickers, we need support and concerted action at all levels.

Let me illustrate with an example from my home country of the Netherlands how cities and regions are impacted by trafficking, but also how they can play a role in combating it in cooperation with other levels of government.

Every municipality in the Netherlands needs to develop policy on the combating of human trafficking by the end of this year. For example: in my own region, the province of Zeeland, all municipalities are working together in order to combat and prevent the different forms of human trafficking, as well as to provide assistance to the victims and vulnerable persons that might be at risk.

Another example that I would like to share with you, is a pilotproject from the city and region of Rotterdam. During this pilotproject law enforcers were able to excercise their duties within all municipalities of this region instead of just their own area. This approach prevents that the combat against human trafficking in one municipality leads to an increase of human trafficking in another municipality.

This illustrates the necessity of working together in the fight against human trafficking.

Thank you.