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Committee on Migrations Issues

The accommodation of people in situation of migration
a major issue for the respect of Human Rights

Statement of the Committee on Migration Issues on the Informal Ministerial Conference, 10 December 2025

The Committee on migration issues takes note of the political appeal expressed in the open letter of 22 May 2025 by several Heads of State and Government, calling for a renewed discussion on migration, security and the interpretation of the European Convention on Human Rights.

We acknowledge the concerns raised by some member States regarding irregular migration, criminal activities and the instrumentalisation of human mobility for geopolitical purposes. These challenges are real and require coordinated, effective and sustainable responses. At the same time, as reaffirmed in our [previous statements](#)¹, migration management cannot and must not be pursued at the expense of the fundamental rights and human dignity of people on the move, nor of the democratic values that unite our member States. Furthermore, migration management must also be considered in the context of Europe's demographic challenges and its consequences of social and economic nature.

In this context, we welcome the Council of Europe's structured proposal to address these concerns within the framework of the Convention and its principles. In particular:

- **The preparation of a political declaration** reaffirming States' obligations to ensure the effective enjoyment of Convention rights for all persons under their jurisdiction, including in the context of irregular migration and the situation of foreign nationals convicted of serious crimes.
- **Renewed support for a new Recommendation on the prevention and fight against the smuggling of migrants**, in full respect of human rights.
- **Consideration of an intergovernmental committee or equivalent mechanism** within the Council of Europe to address urgent migration-related issues and connected policy areas.

¹ Statement endorsed by the Conference of INGOs – "Internal security and border management in the context of migration: Respect for human rights is essential", 11 April 2025.

- **The encouragement of international-level discussions** on migration, ensuring coherence between the work of the Council of Europe and that of other multilateral actors.

As underlined in our [recent statements](#)², we observe with concern the increasing **instrumentalisation of migration** and the pressures on civil society organisations working to support people in vulnerable situations. Policies that restrict access to asylum, criminalise humanitarian assistance or weaken procedural guarantees are incompatible with the Convention of Human Rights and undermine fundamental rights protections and the rule of law.

In this regard, we recall that no hierarchy exists between human rights. All persons (people in situation of migration, asylum seekers, or victims of trafficking) are entitled to equal protection. Security concerns can never justify the limitation of rights for groups or weakening Convention guarantees.

The Committee on Migration Issues is particularly concerned by passages of the open letter that conflate migration and criminality, such as references to people who “come to our countries and decide to commit crimes”, or suggestions that this minority “undermines the very foundation of our societies”. Such language is unacceptable, as it contributes to stigmatisation, reinforces disinformation, and amplifies narratives that blur the distinction between individuals who engage in criminal acts and most migrants who do not. Combating crime and protecting victims is essential but must be pursued without creating associations between criminality and migration.

The Committee emphasises that **security and human rights are not incompatible objectives**. Effective responses to irregular migration, smuggling networks or systemic challenges must respect the Convention, preserve access to asylum, protect victims of trafficking, and safeguard civic space for humanitarian and civil society actors.

The Committee on Migration Issues of the Conference of INGOs therefore stands ready to contribute constructively to the follow-up to the Secretary General’s plan and to engage with Member States, national authorities and all Council of Europe bodies to ensure that future work reconciles security, human dignity and the non-negotiable principles of the Convention.

² *Statement endorsed by the Conference of INGOs – “Tendencies of democratic regression”, 14 October 2025.*