

**Event on the occasion of the 50th plenary meeting of the
Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA)**

22 March 2024

**Opening statement by Ms Helen Lorez-Schweig,
Deputy Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the Council of Europe**

Excellencies,

Good morning to all of you. I am very pleased to be with you today and I would like to thank Ms Helga Gayer, GRETA's President, for organizing this important meeting which will reflect on the 15 years of GRETA's activities, its achievements as well as its challenges in ensuring that our Convention is fully implemented. I also wish to thank the Secretariat for its invaluable support to this Meeting.

Just recently, GRETA visited Liechtenstein and our national administration could once again convince itself of GRETA's high quality work. We are happy that the group received significant insights into Liechtenstein's current fight against human trafficking, which not only focusses on the national but also on the international level.

As you are all well aware, we have dedicated our Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on strengthening the core values of human rights, democracy and rule of law. Of course, this dedication also includes our common fight against human trafficking.

Excellencies,

Liechtenstein is a proud state party to the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and attaches utmost importance to meeting its obligations under it. The first Commentary on the Convention is indeed an invaluable tool for our national administration to improve its understanding of the Convention.

The Commentary was prepared by the Boltzmann Institute for Fundamental and Human Rights and we feel very honoured that the two main drafters of the Commentary are with us today: Ms. Planitzer, Mr. Sax, I am very much looking forward to your deliberations and your suggestions on how we can make the commentary more known and how we can strengthen trafficking victims' access to justice and effective remedies.

Excellencies,

During these times of crisis, GRETA is playing an important part in ensuring that the Convention is fully implemented. This is particularly relevant in the context of Russia's heinous war of aggression against Ukraine, which has led to unspeakable suffering and to intolerable human trafficking risks.

We are convinced, that the Convention and GRETA have proven their relevance in preventing human trafficking risks of the refugee crisis caused by the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

From the very beginning of Russia's aggression, Liechtenstein has been welcoming displaced persons from Ukraine in need of protection.

So far, 1% of our inhabitants are Ukrainian refugees. In order to minimize human trafficking risks, we have undertaken activities in the area of financial inclusion for Ukrainian refugees. In this regard, the three largest banks in Liechtenstein are providing refugees from Ukraine with fee-free bank accounts.

In our international fight against human trafficking, we have been giving special attention to applying the follow-the-money approach. Given that human trafficking is a top predicate offence to money laundering, we are convinced that human trafficking can only be combated successfully, if the global financial sector is involved.

For us, this is not just a compliance discussion. Creating greater financial inclusion is critical, too. And, of course, responsible lending and investment have also a huge impact. The interest and expertise of Liechtenstein's financial center and philanthropic sector led us to the establishment of the "Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking Initiative" (FAST). The FAST initiative is also a good example for how public-private partnerships can make a difference. Such partnerships are an important part of Liechtenstein's approach also to other challenges, for example refugee support.

Today's event is yet another great example on the added value of partnerships and we are looking forward to the views shared from all sectors on the future of the monitoring of the Convention.

Excellencies

We very much look forward to today's discussions on the impact of GRETA's work as well as its significance for a strong international rules-based order. Let me also once again reiterate the Liechtenstein's Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe full support for GRETA's high quality work which generates tangible added value for our common fight against human trafficking.

I thank you!