

Roundtable “Violence against women
and the role of Parliaments and Parliamentarians
in implementing the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention”

21 November 2025, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova

Welcome and opening remarks by Theodoros Rousopoulos
President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Good afternoon,

- welcome to all speakers and participants and many thanks to our hosts for welcoming us in the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova to hold a parliamentary roundtable to discuss the role of parliamentarians in implementing the Istanbul Convention.
- Violence against women and girls: most widespread human rights violation. Knows no borders and makes no difference between social classes.
- In this time of growing attacks against the Istanbul Convention, fuelled by disinformation and manipulation, as we have recently seen in Latvia, I look forward to hearing from the Moldovan authorities and MPs about their own experience in the ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention.
- Moldovan Presidency of the CM: has made the implementation of the Istanbul Convention one of its political priorities by organizing *inter alia* this roundtable together with the Women@PACE group, which is a very positive step.

- Happy to see so many of eminent Moldovan participants with us today, including the Minister of Labour and Social protection, Ms Natalia Plugaru.
- The Republic of Moldova ratified the Istanbul Convention in 2022 and GREVIO published its evaluation report in November 2023, where it welcomed *“the significant commitment demonstrated by the Moldovan authorities to combat violence against women and implement the Istanbul Convention”*.
- The Parliamentary Assembly has long established preventing and combating violence against women as one of its key priorities, including the promotion of the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and its implementation on the ground.
- A General Rapporteur on Violence against Women was established in 2012 and the Equality and Non-Discrimination Committee will appoint the next one at its meeting on 3 December 2025.
- The Assembly also set up a Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence, which brings together parliamentarians from national delegations to the Parliamentary Assembly, as well as observers and partners for democracy.
- The Network provides a forum for MPs to exchange information and good practices in preventing and combating violence against women and girls, reaffirming the political will to end gender-based violence in Europe.

- The Network also maintains a strong global reach, notably through participation in the annual meetings of the UN Committee on the Status of Women, where a side-event is organised every March in New York. These events strengthen co-operation with international partners, reinforcing the Network's role as a bridge between national parliaments, regional and global human rights mechanisms.
- A key current activity of the Network is the preparation of a new HELP course on violence against women and domestic violence specifically targeting parliamentarians. This will be the first-ever online HELP course targeting MPs. We plan to launch this course in the first half of next year, to provide parliamentarians with practical tools in supporting them in their role to support the ratification, implementation and monitoring of the Istanbul Convention at the national level.
- Demonstrating its capacity to respond quickly to emerging challenges, the Network will soon be discussing its priorities for 2026, including addressing the disinformation and misconceptions about the Istanbul Convention that continue to circulate as part of the anti-rights movements.
- The Assembly currently has a report under preparation, analysing the lessons learned in the more than 10 years of application of the Istanbul Convention, drawing good practices and remaining challenges. This is part of the Assembly's decision to take stock of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention every two years.

- I would like to end with a reference to the unique role that the Istanbul Convention gives to national parliaments and to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.
- Article 70 of the Istanbul Convention, entitled “Parliamentary involvement in monitoring”, establishes the unprecedented obligation for Parties in a human rights treaty to involve national parliaments in the evaluation of the implementation of the Convention. Furthermore, national authorities must submit to their national parliaments the evaluation reports published by GREVIO, the Convention’s independent monitoring body.
- I look forward to the discussions this afternoon about the different experiences of MPs in the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, from the promotion of its ratification to participating in its implementation and evaluation, at the national and regional levels.

As the International Day on the Elimination of Violence against Women is fast approaching, on 25 November, I would like to finish by conveying to you the commitment of our Assembly to preventing and combating violence against women and girls in our continent and beyond. Let’s continue working together towards this common objective, and with even more determination given the context of growing attacks on the golden standard developed by the Council of Europe, the Istanbul Convention.