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Strasbourg, 23 September 2024

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

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**34th meeting of the Committee of the Parties**

Strasbourg, 21 June 2024

**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 34th meeting on 21 June 2024 in Strasbourg. The meeting was held in a hybrid format, with some members participating online via Zoom. Pending the election of the new Chair of the Committee, the meeting was opened by the Executive Secretary.

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

2. The Executive Secretary 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 noted that the first terms of office of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee of the Parties had expired on 17 June. She recalled that the term of office of the Chair and the Vice-Chair was one year and could be renewed once. The Executive Secretary indicated that prior to the meeting, Ambassador Maria Spassova (Bulgaria) had expressed her interest to continue as Chair for a second term of office. No other candidates for the Chair were proposed. The Committee elected Ambassador Spassova as its Chair by acclamation for a second term of office of one year.

4. Ambassador Spassova thanked the Committee for the confidence placed in her by electing her as Chair for a second term of office and stated that it was an honour to continue assuming this role and promoting the Convention and its effective implementation.

5. The Chair invited members to elect a new Vice-Chair of the Committee. She indicated that Ambassador Jean-Cedric Janssens de Bisthoven (Belgium) could not run for a second term as Vice-Chair of the Committee because of his imminent departure from the Council of Europe, and thanked on behalf of the Committee for his engagement.

6. The Chair indicated that Ambassador Sini Paukkunen-Mykkänen (Finland) had expressed interest in assuming the role of Vice-Chair. No other candidates were proposed. The Committee elected Ambassador Paukkunen-Mykkänen as its Vice-Chair by acclamation for a first term of office of one year.

7. Ambassador Paukkunen-Mykkänen thanked the Committee for the confidence placed in her and stated that she would do her utmost to support the implementation of the Convention, noting that a lot of progress had been made in the 15 years following its entry into force, but there were also important challenges ahead.

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

8. The Chair noted that no new signatures and/or ratifications had been submitted since the last meeting of the Committee (15 December 2024). She underlined that the invitation to Tunisia to accede to the Convention had been extended until 7 February 2026 by decision of the Committee of Ministers of 5 April 2024. Further, she noted that the Moroccan authorities had continued to express interest in joining the Convention, but had not yet submitted a request to the Committee of Ministers to invite Morocco to accede to the Convention.

**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. The President of GRETA informed the Committee of GRETA's activities in the period following the previous meeting of the Committee. She indicated that GRETA had held its 50th plenary meeting in March 2024, which was an occasion to mark GRETA's 15th anniversary. The anniversary event provided an opportunity to take stock of GRETA's findings from the third evaluation round, discuss the impact of the monitoring work, and reflect on future priorities. Further, in April, GRETA had published its 13th general report, covering the calendar year 2023.

11. Furthermore, Ms Gayer indicated that since the beginning of 2024, GRETA had carried out six country evaluation visits: four under the fourth evaluation round of the Convention (to Albania, Croatia, Moldova and Slovakia), and two under the third evaluation round (to Liechtenstein and Ukraine). In the second half of the year, GRETA expected to carry out seven visits under the fourth evaluation round and would also explore the possibility of carrying out GRETA's first visit to Israel, which had been postponed from December 2023.

12. Ms Gayer noted that GRETA held regular discussions on its working methods and on how to improve its internal procedures. The launch of the fourth evaluation round of the Convention in 2023 provided an opportunity to reflect on the structure and content of GRETA's reports.

13. GRETA's President recalled that in the first half of 2024, GRETA had published eight final reports under the third evaluation round (concerning Andorra, Germany, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Monaco and Switzerland), on the basis of which the Committee would adopt draft recommendations at this meeting. She noted that GRETA's reports were the product of an intensive dialogue with the national authorities, as well as the collection of information from a range of relevant sources, including civil society and victims of trafficking. Ms Gayer stressed that GRETA was always attentive to underlining positive developments and promising practices, as well as any gaps and implementation difficulties, taking into account the national context in each State Party. The full text of Ms Gayer's statement is set out in Appendix III.

14. Ambassador Tatiana Pârvu (Ambassador-at-large, Republic of Moldova) thanked Ms Gayer for her intervention and expressed appreciation for the constructive dialogue during GRETA's recent fourth evaluation visit to the Republic of Moldova. She noted that the national authorities were already discussing how to implement some of the preliminary findings of GRETA's delegation, notably on adjusting the legislation in relation to the status of foreign victims.

15. Ms Nataliia Bohdanova (State expert of the Expert Group on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Domestic Violence and Gender Equality, Directorate for Digital Development and Social Services, Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine) thanked GRETA for the organisation of the recent third evaluation visit to Ukraine, which had included meetings at central and local level, and was particularly important in the context of the full-scale aggression by the Russian Federation. She noted that the structure of exploitation had changed and there were new challenges related to the war, including an increase in the number of child victims. Ms Bohdanova expressed the hope that the new report by GRETA would help the Ukrainian authorities to strengthen the fight against human trafficking.

**Agenda item 6: Examination of GRETA's reports on the implementation of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Andorra, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Monaco and Switzerland (third evaluation round) and adoption of recommendations in respect of these Parties**

16. The Chair of the Committee recalled that GRETA had adopted and published eight final reports, concerning Andorra, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Monaco and Switzerland, under the third evaluation round of implementation of the Convention. The eight draft recommendations based on these

GRETA reports had been made available to the Committee on 24 May 2024 and members of the Committee had been invited to send any proposals for amendments by 14 June 2024. The Chair noted that the Secretariat had not received any proposals for amendments to the draft recommendations in advance of the meeting. She recalled that the draft recommendations set a two-year deadline for reporting back to the Committee of the Parties of the measures taken.

### **6.1. Andorra**

17. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Andorra.

18. Ambassador Joan Forner Rovira (Permanent Representative of Andorra to the Council of Europe) congratulated the Chair on her re-election and the Vice-Chair on her election. He indicated that the Andorran authorities had initially perceived GRETA's report as disproportionately critical, but these misconceptions were subsequently corrected thanks to constructive exchanges with GRETA's Secretariat. At the same time, Ambassador Rovira expressed the view that some of the recommendations in GRETA's report did not take into account the specific characteristics of Andorra, which had not had any cases of human trafficking, as well as other small countries. He considered that there was a need to review the way in which GRETA reports were prepared in order to ensure that they focused on the priority areas for each country, and proposed to discuss, under agenda item 9, the setting up a joint working group between State Parties and GRETA (see paragraph 66). The full text of Ambassador Rovira's statement is set out in Appendix IV.

19. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Andorra and decided to request the Government of Andorra to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 21 June 2026.

### **6.2. Finland**

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

21. Ms Marjatta Hiekka (Legal Counsellor at the Unit for Human Rights Courts and Conventions of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland) thanked GRETA and the Secretariat for the thorough, comprehensive and objective work while evaluating Finland for the third evaluation round. She referred to developments in Finland following GRETA's country visit in May 2023, following the formation of a new coalition Government and the adoption of a Government Programme which affirmed Finland's commitment to comply with human rights and other international treaties. These included commitments to secure adequate funding for the provision of support to victims of crimes, to protect the rights of children, and to prevent labour exploitation or issues of employment and labour migration. She concluded by affirming Finland's commitment to open and constructive cooperation with treaty bodies and respect for their independence and impartiality. The full text of Ms Hiekka's statement is set out in Appendix V.

22. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Finland and decided to request the Government of Finland to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 21 June 2026.

### **6.3. Germany**

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

24. Mr Florian Wehner (Policy Officer in Division 402 of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth of Germany) expressed appreciation for the constructive co-operation with GRETA and the Committee of the Parties. He referred to steps taken to strengthen the fight against human trafficking, such as the reinforcing the Financial Control of Undeclared Work (FKS), the development of an innovative tool to detect victims of sexual exploitation online, the criminalisation of the use of services of victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, as well the establishment of an independent National Reporting Mechanism. Further, he noted that the German Government was determined to adopt a

national action plan covering all forms of trafficking within the current legislative period, which ends in 2025. The full text of Mr Wehner's statement is set out in Appendix VI.

25. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Germany and decided to request the Government of Germany to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 21 June 2026.

#### **6.4. Hungary**

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

27. Mr Zoltán Turai (Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Hungary to the Council of Europe) thanked GRETA for the excellent co-operation in the context of the third evaluation and affirmed the Hungarian Government's commitment to combating human trafficking and implementing the recommendations contained in GRETA's report.

28. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Hungary and decided to request the Government of Hungary to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 21 June 2026.

#### **6.5. Italy**

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

30. Ms Erika Oliva (Department for Equal Opportunities at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of Italy) thanked GRETA for the constructive dialogue in the context of the third evaluation of Italy. She referred to some of the steps taken by Italy since GRETA's last visit in February 2023, such as the implementation of a new National Referral Mechanism and the launch of a new call for projects for trafficking victims' detection and assistance amounting to 28.8 million euros. She also noted that the Technical Committee which oversees the implementation of the National Anti-Trafficking Plan would soon meet to discuss GRETA's report and how to incorporate the recommendations in Italy's future actions. The full text of Ms Oliva's statement is set out in Appendix VII.

31. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Italy and decided to request the Government of Italy to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 21 June 2026.

#### **6.6. Lithuania**

32. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Lithuania.

33. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Lithuania and decided to request the Government of Lithuania to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 21 June 2026.

#### **6.7. Monaco**

34. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Monaco.

35. Ambassador Gabriel Revel (Permanent Representative of Monaco to the Council of Europe) congratulated the Chair and Vice-Chair for their election. He thanked GRETA for the report and the quality of the dialogue during the evaluation visit. He underlined that the Monegasque authorities had taken due note of GRETA's recommendations and intended to implement them as far as possible. He referred to recent consultations with the French authorities on the possibility of accommodating victims of trafficking in specialised shelters in France. Further, he affirmed Monaco's intention to conclude the work on the adoption

of an inter-agency co-ordination plan and to continue efforts to improve the legal framework in order to comply with the Convention. The full text of Ambassador Revel's statement is set out in Appendix VIII.

36. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Monaco and decided to request the Government of Monaco to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 21 June 2026.

## **6.8. Switzerland**

37. The Chair invited the Committee to consider the draft recommendation concerning Switzerland.

38. Mr Boris Mesaric (Unit against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants, Federal Office of Police, Switzerland) congratulated the Chair and Vice-Chair on their election. He underlined the importance of GRETA's assessment as it is the only monitoring body carrying out comprehensive evaluation of the implementation of anti-trafficking commitments. He noted that there remained some important challenges in Switzerland, in particular in relation to combating trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation and child trafficking. At the same time, he indicated that the Swiss authorities did not fully agree with all the conclusions of GRETA's report, in particular those related to the need to amend the criminalisation of human trafficking and to strengthen the criminal justice response to trafficking.

39. The Committee adopted the recommendation in respect of Switzerland and decided to request the Government of Switzerland to inform it of measures taken to comply with this recommendation by 21 June 2026.

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

40. 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 Estonia in the context of the second evaluation round of the Convention and by the Governments of Armenia, France, Malta and Norway, in the context of the third evaluation round of the Convention. The Chair invited the representatives of the countries concerned to take the floor concerning their authorities' replies to the Committee of the Parties' recommendations.

### ***Second evaluation round***

#### **7.1. Estonia**

41. Mr Silver Küngas (Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the Council of Europe) congratulated the Chair and Vice-Chair on their election. He underlined that Estonia highly valued the co-operation with GRETA and the Committee of the Parties and was committed to implementing the recommendations made in the context of the second evaluation round. He referred to efforts made regarding the training of professionals, the adoption of a new Victim Support Act, and ongoing work for the adoption of a National Referral Mechanism. He also indicated that in the context of transposing the revised EU Anti-Trafficking Directive, legislative amendments would be introduced by the end of 2025 at the earliest.

42. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to provide comments on the report submitted by Estonia. Ms Gayer noted positively the numerous training activities for relevant professionals, as well as awareness raising of the general public and the increase in the number of labour inspections. Nevertheless, she underlined the continued absence of a shelter for victims of trafficking and the fact that the criminalisation of trafficking in human beings was still not in line with the Convention and noted that the respect of the obligations under the Council of Europe Anti-Trafficking Convention should not be delayed because of waiting for the transposition of the revised the EU Directive.

## **7.2. Greece**

43. Mr Ioannis Brachos (Head of the Office of the National Rapporteur for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of Greece) apologised for the fact that the Greek authorities had not been in a position to submit their report in response to the Committee's recommendation by the deadline of 16 June 2024, and asked the Committee to extend the deadline and to discuss Greece's report at the next meeting.

44. The Committee agreed to postpone the consideration of Greece's report to its next meeting.

### ***Third evaluation round***

## **7.3. Armenia**

45. Mr Aramays Grigoryan (Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the Council of Europe) affirmed Armenia's commitment to combating trafficking in human beings and referred to the adoption in January 2023 of Armenia's 7th National Action Plan against Human Trafficking. Further, he indicated that legislative steps were in the process of being taken to enable the designation of the Human Rights Defender of Armenia as independent national rapporteur on human trafficking. The full text of Mr Grigoryan's statement is set out in Appendix IX.

46. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to provide comments on the report submitted by Armenia. Ms Gayer welcomed the measures taken by the Armenian authorities to implement the recommendations, in particular the provision of training to relevant professionals, enhancing the capacity and mandate of the Health and Labour Inspection Body, as well as the preparation of information leaflets in several languages for victims of trafficking. However, she noted that little information was provided in the Armenian authorities' report on steps to improve access to free legal aid and compensation for victims of trafficking. Noting Armenia's plans to extend the geographic scope of victim support services, she underlined that the lack of increased funding for these services may undermine the impact of the extension.

## **7.4. Bosnia and Herzegovina**

47. The Chair informed the Committee that the report of the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was due on 17 June 2024, had not been received prior to the meeting.

48. The Committee decided to postpone the consideration of Bosnia and Herzegovina's report to its next meeting.

## **7.5. France**

49. Ms Roxana Maracineanu (Secretary General of the Interministerial Task Force on combating violence against women and human trafficking, MIPROF) underlined that combating human trafficking was high on the political agenda in France. She referred to several recent measures, such as the increase in the human resources of MIPROF, the adoption of the third National Action Plan against human trafficking, as well as the ongoing work for the preparation of a National Referral Mechanism (NRM). She also indicated that efforts were being made to further develop training on human trafficking and to raise awareness of the risks of trafficking linked to the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The new National Action Plan also foresees the setting up of a National Observatory on trafficking and exploitation which should make it possible to improve data collection and analysis. Efforts were also being made to address the sexual exploitation and trafficking of children and the protection of child victims, the number of places in the specialised shelter for child victims of trafficking having increased to 12.



50. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to provide comments on the report submitted by France. Ms Gayer welcomed the measures taken to implement the recommendations, including the adoption of a new National Action Plan, the increase of the staff of MIPROF, and the training provided to airline staff, taxi drivers, short-term rental platform and hotel groups, which is particularly important in the context of the Olympic and Paralympic Games taking place in Paris. Another important development was the setting up of a police cyber watch group, which is responsible for cyber patrolling of social networks and alerting the authorities to any offences relating to human trafficking. However, a number of challenges remained to be addressed, including the setting up of an NRM for the identification and referral to assistance of trafficking victims. The figures provided in the report showed that the number of trafficking victims compensated by the State and the amounts allocated remained low. Further, the report did not indicate an increase in public funding to cover the services provided to victims of trafficking by NGOs.

### **7.6. Latvia**

51. The Chair informed the Committee that the report of the Latvian authorities, which was due on 17 June 2024, had not been received prior to the meeting.

52. The Committee agreed to postpone the consideration of Latvia's report to the next meeting.

### **7.7. Malta**

53. Ambassador Francesca Camilleri Vettiger (Permanent Representative of Malta to the Council of Europe) congratulated the Chair and Vice-Chair on their election. She informed the Committee that a new National Strategy for Combating Human Trafficking, with an accompanying Action Plan, was about to be adopted. She also referred to the adoption of a new law regarding the licensing of temporary work agencies, the setting up of a Technical Working Group on Criminal Justice and Legislative Amendments, and the forthcoming launch of a new awareness-raising campaign in July 2024. Finally, she indicated that combating human trafficking will be high on the agenda of Malta's Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2025.

54. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to comment on the report submitted by Malta. Ms Gayer welcomed the setting up of the Technical Working Group on Criminal Justice and Legislative Amendments and the forthcoming adoption of the first national Anti-Trafficking Strategy. The working group had agreed to amend the legislation to make state compensation available to all trafficking victims in Malta, regardless of nationality or residence status of the victim. However, no victim of human trafficking had yet claimed state compensation in Malta. While the Maltese authorities' report referred to steps taken to inform asylum seekers about human trafficking risks and services, access for specialised NGOs to detention centres remains challenging, impeding efforts to identify trafficking victims proactively.

### **7.8. Norway**

55. Mr Jan Austad (Senior Adviser at the Ministry of Justice and Public Security of Norway) congratulated the Chair and Vice-Chair on their election. He indicated that work was ongoing regarding the preparation of a National Strategy against Trafficking in Human Beings by the spring of 2025. Further, the text of the new law on state compensation adopted by Parliament had taken into account GRETA's recommendations. He also expressed gratitude for the recently organised roundtable in Oslo as a follow-up of GRETA's report and the Committee of the Parties' recommendations, which had provided an opportunity to discuss the recommendations in an open and frank way.

56. The Chair invited the President of GRETA to provide comments on the report submitted by Norway. Ms Gayer welcomed the ongoing work regarding the adoption of a National Anti-trafficking Strategy, the development of a new guide for the identification of victims of trafficking, the organisation of seminars for employees of child welfare services, and the adoption of the Action Plan to Combat Social Dumping and Work-Related Crime, which contains measures aimed at strengthening employees' rights and the assistance

to exploited workers. However, she noted that there had been no increase in the human resources of specialised police anti-trafficking units, the number of convictions for human trafficking remained low, and no information was provided on progress regarding the recovery and reflection period.

### **7.9. Portugal**

57. The Chair informed the Committee that the report of the Portuguese authorities, which was due on 17 June 2024, had not been received prior to the meeting.

58. The Committee agreed to postpone the consideration of Portugal's report to the next meeting.

### **7.10. United Kingdom**

59. The Chair noted that the United Kingdom's response to the recommendation of the Committee of the Parties was due on 17 December 2023 and that the British authorities had requested several extensions of the deadline.

60. Ambassador Sandy Moss (Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the Council of Europe) informed the Committee that due to the recent announcement of the UK General Election which had led to the dissolution of the UK Parliament, there were restrictions on public statements during the pre-election period and, as a result, the UK Government had been unable to provide a response to the Committee's recommendation. Nevertheless, he highlighted some of the progress made by the United Kingdom, notably the increase in the number of decision makers for the National Referral Mechanism, the provision of information to trafficking victims in a language they understand on their rights, including on how to access legal aid, as well as the provision of training on the non-punishment principle for professionals in light with the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *VCL and AN v. United Kingdom*. The full text of Ambassador Moss's statement is set out in Appendix X.

61. The Committee agreed to postpone the consideration of the United Kingdom's report to its next meeting.

### **Agenda item 8: Follow-up information provided in reply to Committee of the Parties' recommendations**

62. The Chair noted that, since the previous meeting of the Committee, the Government of Denmark had submitted a report with additional information in reply to the Committee of the Parties recommendations.

### **Agenda item 9: Fourth evaluation round of the Convention: discussion on a procedure for supervising the implementation of Committee of the Parties' recommendations**

63. The Chair recalled that at its 33rd meeting, the Committee of the Parties had held an exchange of views on a possible procedure for supervising the implementation of the Committee's recommendations by State Parties and had agreed to continue the discussion at the present meeting. She noted that GRETA's reports revealed that there were continuing gaps in the implementation of the Convention, resulting in repeated recommendations, and in some cases, little or no progress had been made to implement certain recommendations. That was the reason why the previous Chair of the Committee, Ambassador Meuwly, had suggested that the Committee of the Parties consider adopting a procedure for monitoring the implementation of the recommendations in case of continued non-implementation. The Chair stressed that by giving political weight to the conclusions of GRETA, the Committee should aim to increase the responsibility of State Parties to implement the Convention.

64. The Chair invited the Executive Secretary to present the document prepared by the Secretariat (THB-CP(2024)) entitled "Proposal for a procedure for supervising the implementation of Committee of the Parties' recommendations". The Executive Secretary noted that the stocktaking of the third evaluation round of the Convention had brought to light some persisting gaps in the implementation of the Convention, resulting in repeated recommendations. Therefore, the launch of the fourth evaluation round of the Convention provided a good opportunity to put in place a supervision procedure by the Committee of the Parties. Under the proposed draft new procedure, the Committee could select a maximum of three recommendations for each State Party which will be subject to a supervision procedure. The selection of these recommendations would be based on the repetition of the same (or similar) recommendations at the level of "urge" during three consecutive evaluation rounds of the Convention. State Parties would continue to be given two years to report back to the Committee on the steps taken to comply with the recommendations. After the State Party presents its report, an assessment of the information will be prepared by the Secretariat and discussed by the Committee. If necessary for the proper assessment of the implementation of the recommendations, the Committee may request additional information from the State Party and can also take into account information from other sources, including national anti-trafficking rapporteurs, national human rights institutions, specialised NGOs and other international organisations. The Committee would then adopt conclusions on the implementation of the recommendation(s) covered by the supervision procedure. The conclusions could specify if the recommendations have been "fully implemented", "partially implemented" or "not implemented", and indicate, if necessary, the remaining gaps and/or additional measures to be taken within a specific timeframe. The Executive Secretary stressed that the draft proposal sought to enhance the involvement of the Committee in ensuring the proper implementation of the Convention, while avoiding too much additional workload for the members of the Committee and the national authorities.

65. The Chair opened the floor to members of the Committee for questions or comments on the proposal presented by the Executive Secretary.

66. Ambassador Joan Forner Rovira (Permanent Representative of Andorra to the Council of Europe) proposed the setting up of a joint working group (see also paragraph 18 and Appendix IV) to examine ways of improving GRETA's reporting system so that it is better suited to the individual circumstances of each State Party, as well as reviewing the election process of GRETA members. Regarding the draft proposal for a supervision procedure by the Committee of the Parties, he expressed concerns that it would create an extra burden on the Andorran authorities.

67. In the ensuing discussions, the representatives of Switzerland, Monaco, North Macedonia, Greece and Albania spoke in favour of the proposal to set up a joint working group. Mr Boris Mesaric (Unit against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants, Federal Office of Police, Switzerland) expressed the view that GRETA's recommendations had become more extensive over time and that a review of GRETA's monitoring procedure should be conducted before moving any further on the proposed supervision procedure. Ambassador Gabriel Revel (Permanent Representative of Monaco to the Council of Europe) suggested that the procedure for the election of GRETA members should be amended to ensure the availability of at least two members who are fluent in French. Ambassador Svetlana Geleva (Permanent Representative of North Macedonia to the Council of Europe) indicated that while her authorities did not have concerns regarding the co-operation with GRETA, the proposal to set up a working group provided an opportunity to enhance the dialogue between GRETA and State Parties and also review the procedure for the election of GRETA members. Mr Michael Nakos (Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Greece to the Council of Europe) noted that the Andorran proposal could be examined in a positive spirit. Ms Brunilda Koço (Deputy Permanent Representative of Albania to the Council of Europe) noted positively the work of GRETA, which had recently carried out the fourth evaluation visit to Albania, but in view of the concerns expressed by some other countries, she supported the proposal to set up a working group.

68. The representatives of Germany and Finland raised concerns about the proposal to set up a working group which reviews GRETA's reporting system. Mr Florian Wehner (Policy Officer in Division 402 of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth of Germany) noted that the standards of the Convention should be the same for all States Parties and the same benchmarks should apply to all

Parties during an evaluation round. He also underlined the importance of safeguarding the independence and impartiality of GRETA. Ms Marjatta Hiekka (Legal Counsellor at the Unit for Human Rights Courts and Conventions of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland) stressed the importance of respecting the independence and impartiality of GRETA and recalled that States Parties bore the responsibility for proposing and electing GRETA members meeting all the criteria.

69. The Chair invited the Executive Secretary to provide comments on the different proposals made by members of the Committee. The Executive Secretary noted that the ongoing discussion related to three issues. One concerned the procedure for the election of GRETA members. She recalled that a working group had been set up by the Committee back in 2013 to prepare a draft proposal for revised rules on the election procedure of GRETA members, which had subsequently been submitted to the Committee of Ministers for adoption. She noted that any decision to revise the rules on the election procedure would have to take into account the fact that they were very similar to those of other monitoring bodies, in particular GREVIO. The second issue concerned the proposal to increase the role of the Committee of the Parties in supervising the implementation of the Convention, which was the subject of the draft procedure under discussion under this agenda item. The third issue was the proposal to set up a joint working group which would look into GRETA's reporting system. She noted that the mandate of such a working group would have to be clearly defined and agreed upon, which could not be done at the current meeting as State Parties would need to consult their capitals.

70. The Chair invited GRETA's President to comment on the proposal to set up a working group which would look into GRETA's reporting process. Ms Gayer underlined that GRETA was constantly discussing and updating its working methods, including when it comes to the evaluation of small countries which do not yet have confirmed human trafficking cases. She stressed the importance of using the same benchmarks for all State Parties, noting that it would be dangerous to introduce a differentiation. GRETA's President also expressed the view that the Convention established an excellent monitoring system which should not be changed.

71. Mr Ioannis Brachos (Head of the Office of the National Rapporteur for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings of Greece) expressed support for GRETA's monitoring procedure and noted that it should not be watered down. In his view, the main problem was that there were too many reporting requests from different international organisations.

72. Mr Wolfgang Spadinger (Head of Unit for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings at the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs of Austria) expressed appreciation for the valuable work carried out for GRETA and noted that members of the Committee needed more time to consult with their countries and prepare in advance for discussing this important topic at a future meeting.

73. Ambassador Joan Forner Rovira (Permanent Representative of Andorra to the Council of Europe) reiterated his proposal to start a reflection process on how the monitoring system could be improved. Ambassador Gabriel Revel (Permanent Representative of Monaco to the Council of Europe) stated that there was no intention to question the independence of GRETA, but to better understand its expectations of State Parties. He reiterated his proposal to start a discussion on how the rules on the election procedure of GRETA members could be revised as regards the competences and linguistic skills requirements.

74. Ms Marjatta Hiekka (Legal Counsellor at the Unit for Human Rights Courts and Conventions of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland) noted that future discussions would need to separate the three different issues, namely the reporting system, the role of the Committee of the Parties in supervising the implementation of recommendations, and the rules on the election of GRETA members. To prepare future discussions, she suggested that the Secretariat prepare a reflection paper covering these issues.

75. The Chair of the Committee concluded that members of the Committee needed more time to consult on the different issues raised and that the Committee's Rules of procedures had to be thoroughly checked before continuing the discussion.

76. The Committee agreed to continue the discussion at its 35th meeting and tasked the Secretariat to prepare a reflection document.

**Agenda item 10: Information on activities aimed at strengthening the implementation of GRETA's conclusions and the Committee of the Parties' recommendations**

77. Due to lack of time, this agenda item was not discussed.

**Agenda item 11: Information on the anti-trafficking activities of other Council of Europe bodies and international organisations of interest to the Committee of the Parties**

78. Due to lack of time, this agenda item was not discussed.

**Agenda item 12: Dates of future meetings**

79. The Committee decided to hold its next meeting on 29 November 2024.

80. The Chair recalled that at that meeting, the Committee would hold elections for GRETA members, She underlined that the deadline for submitting candidatures for GRETA membership was 29 September 2024, and that any candidatures received after that deadline will be treated as being submitted not in compliance with the requirements of Resolution CM/Res(2013)28 and the candidates will not be eligible.

**Agenda item 13: Other business**

81. Mr Wolfgang Spadinger (Head of Unit for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings at the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs of Austria) announced that Austria would present a candidate for the future elections of GRETA members, Ms Ulrike Haberl-Schwarz, former president of the Court of First Instance of Leoben and former Austrian national member of Eurojust.

**Agenda item 14: Adoption of the list of decisions taken**

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

- Election of Ambassador Maria Spassova as Chair of the Committee and Ambassador Sini Paukkunen-Mykkänen as Vice-Chair;
- Adoption of recommendations concerning Andorra, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Monaco and Switzerland;
- Postponing the consideration of the reports submitted by Greece, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Latvia, Portugal and the United Kingdom in reply to the Committee of the Parties' recommendations to the Committee's 35th meeting;
- Continuing the discussions related to agenda item 9 at the 35th meeting.

## 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 Andorra, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Monaco and Switzerland (third evaluation round) and adoption of recommendations in respect of these Parties

#### *Third evaluation round*

- 6.1. Andorra
  - 6.2. Finland
  - 6.3. Germany
  - 6.4. Hungary
  - 6.5. Italy
  - 6.6. Lithuania
  - 6.7. Monaco
  - 6.8. Switzerland
7. Government reports submitted in reply to Committee of the Parties recommendations

#### *Second evaluation round*

- 7.1. Estonia
- 7.2. Greece

#### *Third evaluation round*

- 7.3. Armenia
- 7.4. Bosnia and Herzegovina
- 7.5. France
- 7.6. Latvia
- 7.7. Malta
- 7.8. Norway

- 7.9. Portugal
- 7.10. United Kingdom
- 8. Follow-up information provided in reply to Committee of the Parties' recommendations
- 9. Fourth evaluation round of the Convention: discussion on a procedure for supervising the implementation of Committee of the Parties' recommendations
- 10. Information on activities aimed at strengthening the implementation of GRETA's conclusions and the Committee of the Parties' recommendations
- 11. Information on the anti-trafficking activities of other Council of Europe bodies and international organisations of interest to 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

Ms Brunilda Koço  
Deputy Permanent Representative  
to the Council of Europe

#### ANDORRA / ANDORRE

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Représentant Permanent  
auprès du Conseil de l'Europe

Mme Marta Villagrasa Noguera (*online / en ligne*)  
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Section des Relations Internationales et Coopération  
juridique  
Département de la Justice et de l'intérieur

#### ARMENIA / ARMÉNIE

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to the Council of Europe

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#### AUSTRIA / AUTRICHE

Mr Andreas Lins  
Deputy Permanent Representative  
to the Council of Europe

Mr Wolfgang Spadinger  
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Beings; border traffic; appeal procedures  
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#### BELGIUM / BELGIQUE

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Organised Crime Unit  
Trafficking and smuggling in human beings

#### BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA/BOSNIE- HERZEGOVINE

#### BULGARIA / BULGARIE

Ms Maria Spassova (*Chair / Présidente*)  
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to the Council of Europe

Ms Boyana Trifonova  
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Ms Vasilena Krasteva (*online / en ligne*)  
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Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

#### CROATIA / CROATIE

Mr Toma Galli  
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National Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in  
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**Participants of the Committee of the Parties  
Participants du Comité des Parties****COUNCIL OF EUROPE BODIES /  
ORGANES DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE*****COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS***

Mr Michael O' Flaherty  
(*apologised/excusé*)

**Observers of the Committee of the Parties  
Observateurs du Comité des Parties****Others / Autres****GROUP OF EXPERTS ON ACTION AGAINST  
TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS /  
GROUPE D'EXPERTS SUR LA LUTTE CONTRE LA  
TRAITE DES ETRES HUMAINS (GRETA)**

Ms Helga Gayer  
President of GRETA

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Direction générale de la démocratie et de la dignité humaine***

**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 l'Europe sur la lutte contre la traite des êtres humains (GRETA et Comité des Parties)**

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Executive Secretary

Ms Teresa Armengol de la Hoz  
Administrator

Mr Mesut Bedirhanoglu  
Administrator

Ms Parvine Ghadami  
Administrator

Ms Asja Žujo  
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Ms Saida Théophile  
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Ms Jackie Renaudin-Siddall  
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Ms Silvia Pedrini  
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***Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe / Secrétariat de l'Assemblée parlementaire du Conseil de l'Europe***

Ms Marie Martin  
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***Secretariat of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities / Secrétariat du Congrès des pouvoirs locaux et régionaux***

Ms Inge Hannon  
Co-Secretary of the Committee on Social Inclusion and Human Dignity

### **Interpreters / Interprètes**

Ms Lucie Deburlet-Suter  
Ms Gillian Wakenhut  
Ms Clarissa Worsdale

## Appendix III

### Statement by Ms Helga GAYER, President of GRETA

Madam Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to participate in the 34th meeting of the Committee of the Parties for the periodic exchange between the Committee and GRETA's President, which is an opportunity to update you on GRETA's activities.

Since our last exchange, GRETA has held **one plenary meeting**, in March, which was our 50<sup>th</sup> meeting and an occasion to mark GRETA's 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Many of you attended the anniversary event, which was an excellent occasion to discuss the impact of GRETA's monitoring work, take stock of GRETA's findings from the third evaluation round of the Convention, and reflect on future priorities. All four former GRETA Presidents were present, as well as many other former GRETA members, government experts and civil society representatives. Maud de Boer Buquicchio, who was Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe at the time when the Convention was adopted and GRETA started functioning, noted that in carrying out monitoring tasks, it is important to have an open eye for all contexts in which this abominable crime of trafficking occurs and the constantly evolving market in which the criminals operate to multiply their financial profit. This includes the information technology and artificial intelligence dimension of trafficking.

In April, GRETA published its **13th general report**, which I had the opportunity to present to the Ministers' Deputies on 30 April. After my presentation, some 18 delegations intervened. All of them were very positive about GRETA's work and the level of co-operation during the evaluation process, and complemented GRETA on the quality of its monitoring reports. They also welcomed the focus of the 4th evaluation round chosen by GRETA, on **vulnerabilities** to human trafficking and the use of **information and communication technology**, which brings structural changes to the way offenders operate and exacerbates existing vulnerabilities.

GRETA is periodically reflecting on its **working methods** and on improving its **internal procedures**. The launch of the 4th evaluation round is an opportunity to re-visit the structure and content of GRETA's reports. The first three draft reports under the new evaluation round will be discussed by GRETA at its plenary meeting in the first week of July. In addition to the thematic focus of the new evaluation round, which applies to all countries, GRETA will follow-up on a selected number of issues in each country where implementation gaps remain after four rounds of evaluation. The reports will subsequently be sent to the national authorities, and the comments received from them will be taken into account when preparing and adopting the final reports in November. We expect that the first three reports under the new evaluation round will be published at the beginning of 2025, and the Committee of the Parties will have the opportunity to discuss them at its meeting in the spring of next year.

In addition, GRETA is currently working on a **guidance note on the recovery and reflection period** which is intended to assist State Parties in overcoming difficulties in the application of this key provision of the Anti-Trafficking Convention.

Since the beginning of the year, GRETA has carried out **six country evaluation visits**: four under the fourth evaluation round of the Convention (to Albania, Croatia, Moldova and Slovakia), and two under the third evaluation round, to Liechtenstein and Ukraine. I am particularly grateful to the Ukrainian authorities, and to my GRETA colleagues and the Secretariat, that it was finally possible to carry out the **visit to Ukraine**, originally planned to take place in 2022 and postponed due to Russia's full-scale invasion. It was important for GRETA to collect information on the ground and document the efforts that Ukraine is making to continue combating human trafficking despite the immense challenges created by the war. This was not a GRETA visit like any other and we hope that GRETA's report will provide impetus for the Council of Europe to further

support Ukraine in increasing its capacity to prevent and combat human trafficking and related violations of human rights.

In the second half of the year, GRETA expects to **carry out seven more visits** under the fourth evaluation round. This is an ambitious programme which will depend on the timely reception of the replies to the questionnaire by State Parties, as well as on other factors (elections, forming of governments...). We will also explore the possibility of carrying out GRETA's **first visit to Israel**, which has been postponed since last December.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the first half of this year, GRETA published **eight final reports** under the third evaluation round, concerning Andorra, Germany, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Monaco and Switzerland, which are the subject of the draft recommendations that you will discuss today. I will not attempt to summarise GRETA's conclusions related to these eight countries as this would take much longer than my allotted time. I would just like to note that the draft recommendations are based on GRETA's reports, each of which is the product of an intensive dialogue with the national authorities, as well as the collection of information from a range of relevant sources, including civil society and victims of trafficking. GRETA is always attentive to positive developments and promising practices, which are highlighted in its reports. At the same time, our role as independent and impartial experts is to alert to any gaps and implementation difficulties. The obligations enshrined in the Convention are the same for all States Parties. That being said, many provisions are formulated in a way which leaves a margin of interpretation, **allowing GRETA to take into account the national context in each State Party**. GRETA amends its draft reports in order to take into account the national authorities' comments. Unfortunately, it should be noted that sometimes GRETA receives substantive comments from the authorities on the basis of the final report, rather than at the stage of the draft report, and such comments cannot be incorporated in GRETA's assessment because the report has already been adopted by GRETA in plenary.

Over the 15 years of its existence, GRETA has carried out three evaluation rounds of the Convention and prepared over 130 country reports, as well as a number of guidance notes, third-party submissions to the European Court of Human Rights and activities to promote the standards of the Convention. Our reports bear witness to the multitude of **steps taken by States Parties** to adapt their legislation, policy and practice to the requirements of the Council of Europe Anti-Trafficking Convention, in the light of GRETA's reports and the ensuing Committee of the Parties' recommendations.

There are many examples of the **positive spinoff of the evaluation process**, some of which are highlighted in the recently updated document "Practical impact of GRETA's monitoring work".

At the same time, **not all recommendations are implemented**, due to a range of factors, including lack of resources, prioritisation or political will. Some countries still lack national action plans for combating human trafficking, formalised national referral mechanisms for victims of trafficking, or specialised shelters where all categories of victims could receive protection and assistance. The challenge that we are facing is to ensure proper implementation of GRETA's findings and the Committee's recommendations. In other words, **we need to ensure impact**. In this respect, it is important that the Committee of the Parties, as the political pillar of the monitoring mechanism of the Convention, continues to encourage *the implementation of GRETA's conclusions, rather than attempting to minimise them*.

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

I thank you for your attention and look forward to answering any questions that you may have.

## Appendix IV

### **Statement by Ambassador Joan Forner Rovira, Permanent Representative of Andorra to the Council of Europe**

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I would like to begin by thanking you for your work, which we appreciate and hold in high esteem. We salute your efforts and your professionalism in combating the scourge of human trafficking.

However, I must inform you that there has been some unease on the part of my authorities following GRETA's recent visit and the publication of its report.

There was some puzzlement at what seemed to them to be somewhat disproportionate criticism, not taking enough account of all the efforts made in recent years to prevent and combat trafficking. However, the Andorran authorities soon realised that these were misperceptions which could certainly have been avoided by changing the way that reports were drafted and by establishing an effective dialogue with GRETA.

I wanted to raise this issue with you today, because we are grateful to GRETA, and especially to Ms Nestorova and Ms Ghadami, for the open and sincere dialogue that has been put in place since I last addressed this committee, enabling most of the misperceptions to be corrected and dispelling the unease that had set in. Once again, we welcome this dialogue.

However, we note that most of the reports on the various member States contain a certain number of general recommendations that do not take account of the specific characteristics of small countries, including Andorra, which, I would remind you, has not yet reported a single case of trafficking in human beings. The following three examples spring to mind.

First, the recommendation that co-operation with civil society organisations be developed in connection with the provision of assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings, even though Andorra has no NGOs specifically working in this field. Second, the recommendation that Andorra reinforce training for the professionals of the SAVTEH so that the assistance they provide is specialised and tailored to victims' needs. However, considerable efforts have already been made in this respect and it is impossible to say whether the training provided is effective, given the complete absence of trafficking cases to date. Lastly, the recommendation that Andorra step up the detection and proactive identification of trafficking victims, including among migrant workers and persons in an irregular situation, although it has already introduced indicators for victim identification and training courses for all relevant professionals.

This is intended to be constructive criticism and we do not wish to call into question the quality of GRETA's work. However, we sincerely believe that the time has come to propose a review of the way in which reports are prepared and drafted, especially as we enter the 4th evaluation round.

In our view, streamlining the reports to make them more concise and focused would be very useful and would help countries to understand the priority areas where real efforts need to be made to improve. It might even be possible, once certain standards have been achieved, to stop proposing further measures and allow States to focus on the issues that really matter.

In some cases, it may be useful to provide more detail on the recommendations or examples of good practice in other countries so that member States with less experience have concrete examples of successful implementation.

In conclusion, we believe that today, 16 years after GRETA was set up, it is time to update all Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms, and GRETA in particular. Let us not wait 60 years like for the European



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Social Charter! These changes would ensure an open and honest dialogue with governments and a reporting system that is easier to understand and better suited to the individual circumstances of each member State, since it is ultimately governments that must commit to improving the protection of victims of trafficking.

To this end, we would suggest setting up a joint committee between the States Parties and GRETA to implement this initiative.

Thank you for your attention.

## Appendix V

### **Statement made by Ms Marjatta Hiekka, Legal Counsellor, Unit for Human Rights Courts and Conventions at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland**

Madame Chair,

I would like to start by thanking GRETA and its individual members as well as the CoE Secretariat for a thorough, comprehensive and objective work while evaluating Finland for the 3<sup>rd</sup> evaluation round. The theme on victims access to justice and effective remedies remains very timely and the Draft Report well-grounded and balanced.

Shortly after GRETA's country visit in May 2023, a new coalition Government was formed in Finland. Prime Minister Orpo's Government Programme reaffirms Finland's commitment to comply with human rights and other international treaties, its obligations under EU legislation and the rule of law, including in migration policy.

According to the 2023 National Annual Review of THB, the number of THB victims continues to increase and remains high. Forced labour together with sexual exploitation are the two most common forms of THB in Finland. Majority (64%) of the exploitation cases, with 35 different nationals as victims, are committed in Finland. By the end of 2023, altogether 1563 human beings were within the Assistance System, out of which around 60% were females. From last year's statistics, two things stand out; the fact that majority (73%) of the identified victims were already in Finland either with resident permits or visas and secondly the proportion of victims who were illegally in the country was relatively small (12%).

With regard to the findings in the Draft Report I would like to focus on Prime Minister Orpo's Government Programme, which includes several commitments with the aim to improve national safety and wellbeing. This includes, among other things, for example a commitment to draw up an action plan for victim policy aiming at securing the funding of support services for crime victims and improving the position of victims in criminal proceedings. In addition, the possibilities to raise victim surcharges are examined. The Government will also assess the need to reform the Act on Compensation for Crime Damage in order to strengthen the position of victims and their family members. These actions would enable Finland to reflect effective implementation on several of the recommendations at hand.

Secondly, the Government has made a commitment to pay particular attention to the rights of children, which includes unaccompanied children who have fled the war in Ukraine and to support their participation in Finnish society.

Thirdly, the Government Programme focuses on employment issues and labour immigration, also from THB perspective. In order to prevent the exploitation of employees, the Government plans to tackle punishments for abuse, which will be made significantly more severe and supervision will be improved with several measures. These measures include corporate criminal liability will be extended to usury and aggravated usury in employment.

Lastly, the Government will, in general, step up measures to combat and prevent human trafficking in a cross-administrative and comprehensive way. Labour exploitation related to immigration will be combated and support services for the victims of crime will be secured. Last element in this is to ensure, that the police have sufficient resources throughout the country in terms of police departments and the anti-trafficking unit and ensuring that the police have the powers to investigate and detect abuses in work-based immigration.

Mme Chair, let me finish by reaffirming Finland's continuing strong commitment to open and constructive cooperation with all treaty bodies and respect for treaty bodies independence and impartiality. Today this is even more important than ever.

## **Appendix VI**

### **Statement made by Mr Florian Wehner, Policy Officer in Division 402 on Combating Trafficking of Human Beings and Prostitute Protection Act, Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth of Germany**

Thank you for giving me the floor, Ms President.

First of all, I would like to stress that the German government very much appreciated the good and constructive cooperation with GRETA and the Committee of Parties during this third evaluation round. We also cherish that the measures and submissions of the German Länder are widely reflected in the report. This contributes to a broader and comprehensive picture of the situation in Germany. The recommendations by the Committee of Parties based on GRETA's thorough and comprehensive analysis are crucial guidelines in our work. Since the publication of the second GRETA Report on Germany on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2019, the Federal Government focused on further strengthening our legal framework with the aim of achieving a greater impact of our policies, as well as strengthening our structures with regards to data. Secondly, we highly appreciate that GRETA and the Committee acknowledge Germany's improvements in the current Report and the Recommendations. We are convinced, that a fair and responsive monitoring mechanism is key for its success.

Please allow me to briefly shed some light on the most important improvements since June 2019. The Financial Control of Undeclared Work (FKS) was further strengthened by the Act to Combat Unlawful Employment and Benefit Fraud, that entered into force on 18 July 2019. It enabled the FKS to take action against exploitative working conditions as part of its inspections and to conduct investigations in the field of human trafficking in connection with employment, forced labour and labour exploitation. To build a network for the FKS to fight human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation and to ensure comprehensive victim protection, the FKS works together closely with specialist counselling centres. The Federal Ministry of Finance (BMF), the federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) and the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) agreed in 2021 on a framework agreement to intensify cooperation and improve the distribution of responsibilities between the FKS and the counselling centres for foreign employees of "Fair Mobility" and "Fair Integration" as well as the Service Centre against Labour Exploitation, Forced Labour and Human Trafficking, which is funded by the BMAS. This agreement lists contact persons within the main customs offices of the German Customs Administration and the NGOs, allows for regional exchange meetings, work shadowing and the cooperation in cases of infringement of labour and social rights. It also acknowledges the specific needs and rights of victims of forced labour and trafficking into labour exploitation. The effects of the Act to Combat Unlawful Employment and Benefit Fraud and the associated inspection and investigative powers against exploitative working conditions are visible in the annual Situation Report Trafficking in Human Beings provided by the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA). From 2020 to 2022 the completed investigations of the FKS regarding human trafficking, forced labour and labour exploitation have risen. In 2022 9 investigations got included into the BKA's annual status report. In order to intensify the efforts to prevent and combat human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation, the Central Customs Authority (GZD) continues to carry out trainings for the employees of the FKS in close cooperation with the Service Centre. In 2024 online trainings were held again for FKS officers. According to the current status, the e-learning tool entitled "Recognising and Reacting to Forced Labour" which is developed by the Service Centre will be introduced in July / August 2024. The target group are all FKS officers who may come into contact with those affected by human trafficking, forced labour and labour exploitation.

The rapidly growing digitalisation of human trafficking poses major challenges for those fighting against Trafficking in Human Beings (THB). In the framework of the THB LIBERI project (project has started in 2018 - 2026), the German Criminal Police Office developed and rolled out an innovative tool for automatic research

on adult services websites to counter the shift of prostitution into the digital sphere, identify victims of THB and link suspicious sex offers to organised crime. This tool is successfully used in investigations in several police units in Germany and Austria.

In 2021 Germany expanded Section 232a (6) of the Criminal Code, which criminalizes the use of services from victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, to the extent that "customers" are also held liable if they have failed to recognize the victim's situation due to recklessness. The amendment aims to achieve better protection of victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and forced prostitution. Furthermore, the Criminological Research Institute of Lower-Saxony completed an evaluation of the criminal provisions on trafficking in human beings in 2021.

In the light of these results as well as the expected amendments to the EU anti-trafficking directive, Germany will review its criminal provisions on trafficking in human beings. Germany is also tackling two further issues GRETA and the Committee put a focus on in 2019 and in 2024: a National Action PLAN (NAP) against THB and on improving data related to THB. In November 2022 an independent National Reporting mechanism was set up at the German Institute for Human Rights funded by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizen, Women and Youth. It is tasked to support and enhance measures and reporting on Trafficking in Human Beings through structured and regular collection of data. In July 2023 it published a report on the data situation in Germany. We are currently working on a sustainable legal anchoring of the independent National Reporting Mechanism within this legislative period. Also, within this legislative period the Federal Government is determined to pass a comprehensive NAP against THB including all forms of trafficking. The NAP is intended to optimise the structured planning and efficient bundling of the Federal Government's measures to prevent and combat human trafficking and to protect its victims. It is developed with all Federal Ministries concerned and in close dialogue with the Länder and Civil Society. We completed a second round of Discussions with Civil Society just ten days ago and are planning to compile the NAP by the end of this year.

During the German Presidency of the G7 in 2022 the fight against THB was on the priorities of the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community. In this context, the law enforcement experts discussed and shed light on the growing phenomenon of livestreaming of child sexual abuse. The Interior and Security Ministers of the G7 issued a statement identifying THB as a threat to international security and calling for co-ordinated action in the fight against THB.

And most recently, we made a step in enhancing the protection of children and juveniles. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of June the Federal Government passed a draft law strengthening the structures on combating sexual violence against Children and Juveniles. The draft law anchors and develops important structures as the independent commissioner for child sexual abuse issues, a survivors' board and the independent inquiry-commission into child sexual abuse in Germany. It shall improve the protection of children and juveniles from sexual violence and exploitation and shall aid survivors in overcoming their experiences. Furthermore, the prevention of sexual violence and the quality development of child protection services will be strengthened.

After this tour de force from 2019 until today, it just remains to say, that we are looking forward to continue the trustful dialogue with GRETA and this Committee in the near future.

## **Appendix VII**

### **Statement made by Ms Erika Oliva, Department for Equal Opportunities of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of Italy**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Esteemed Members of the Committee of the Parties,

It is an honour to address you at this 34th meeting of the Committee of the Parties. I would like to begin by expressing our deepest gratitude to GRETA for their visit to Italy in February 2023. Your continuous commitment and unwavering support have been invaluable in advancing our efforts to combat human trafficking.

Since GRETA's visit, Italy has made significant progress. In December 2023, we implemented the new National Referral Mechanism (NRM), a comprehensive framework designed to enhance our response to trafficking cases and victim support. This mechanism, which integrates many of GRETA's recommendations, is now published and available in both English and Italian, ensuring accessibility and transparency.

Following GRETA's recommendations, this past March, the Department of Equal Opportunities, which coordinates the anti-trafficking system in Italy, launched a new call for proposals amounting to 28 800 000 euros. This substantial financial boost demonstrates our commitment to providing the necessary resources to effectively combat trafficking.

Furthermore, the Technical Committee overseeing the implementation of the National Anti-Trafficking Plan met in July 2023 and will soon be convened again. During this meeting, we will thoroughly discuss and incorporate GRETA's recommendations into our future actions. This process ensures that our strategies remain aligned with the best practices and standards advocated by GRETA.

Lastly, we would like to emphasize that GRETA's reports and considerations are fundamental pillars upon which we base our anti-trafficking initiatives. The insights and guidance provided by GRETA play a crucial role in shaping our policies and actions foreseen under our National Action Plan, ensuring that we continuously improve and adapt our approach to meet the evolving challenges in this field.

The Italian Government is fully committed to combating human trafficking. Together, with GRETA's support and collaboration, we can make significant strides in eradicating this grave violation of human rights.

Thank you once again for your invaluable support and dedication.

## **Appendix VIII**

### **Statement made by Ambassador Gabriel Revel, Permanent Representative of Monaco to the Council of Europe**

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Congratulations on your re-election and on the election of your new Vice-Chair.

Regarding today's business, the Monegasque authorities would like to thank GRETA for the report that has just been published on 11 June.

They would praise the dialogue that took place during the visit for its quality.

We have taken due note of the recommendations made, which we intend to implement as far as possible.

Consultations are already underway with the French authorities on how to accommodate victims of trafficking in special shelters in France, with the Principality of Monaco covering the costs. Diplomatic talks are due to be concluded shortly, but have been delayed by the French elections.

Furthermore, having been co-ordinator of the Inter-agency co-ordination plan to combat trafficking in human beings for three years, I can assure you of Monaco's intention to conclude work on the co-ordination plan soon. This work has been going on for several years, mainly because of issues relating to residence permits for victims of trafficking, which are also covered by the neighbourhood agreement in force between France and Monaco since 18 May 1963.

Monaco will continue its efforts in this field to improve its legal framework to meet the requirements of the Convention.

Thank you for your attention.

## **Appendix IX**

### **Statement made by Mr Aramays Grigoryan, Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the Council of Europe**

Armenia is strongly committed to cooperation with GRETA, as demonstrated through our timely submission of the report on the measures taken to comply with Recommendation CP/REC(2022)01 on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings.

In January 2023, Armenia adopted its 7<sup>th</sup> National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Human Beings, which is focused on legislative reform and more enhanced action against trafficking, protection and support to victims. In doing so, the authorities have been actively cooperating with the civil society and NGOs, and we would like to acknowledge their important role in supporting the country's counter-trafficking efforts. The 7th National Action Plan involves a tool, which has been designed to monitor the implementation of counter-trafficking measures.

Additionally, we would like to note that, having considered the recommendation to examine the possibility of establishing an independent National Rapporteur, legislative efforts are currently underway to allow the Human Rights Defender of Armenia to assume that function.

I thank you.



## Appendix X

### **Statement made by Ambassador Sandy Moss, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the Council of Europe**

I would like to begin by thanking the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) for their Third Evaluation Round report on Access to Justice and Effective Remedies for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings, the Committee of the Parties' (COP) Recommendation on the UK, and the Roundtable discussion hosted by GRETA.

The recent announcement of the UK General Election has led to the dissolution of Parliament and there are restrictions on public statements during the pre-election period. As a result, the UK Government is unable to provide a detailed response of the CoP's recommendation at this time.

In lieu of this, I wanted to take this opportunity to highlight some of the progress made by the UK:

- The UK significantly increased its modern slavery workforce for National Referral Mechanism (NRM) to support effective and efficient decision making. Competent authorities have also introduced initiatives including peer coaching of decisions makers and sharing best practice in the use of the case management tool.
- The UK Government has continued to support victims of modern slavery to engage effectively with the Criminal Justice System. Potential victims of modern slavery have access to the legal aid system, including criminal and civil legal aid, legal aid for immigration advice, advice on an asylum claim, employment law advice and for a civil claim of damages.
- The Government provides support to adult potential and confirmed victims of modern slavery through the government-funded Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC). Upon entering MSVCC support, support workers provide adult potential and confirmed victims of modern slavery with information on their rights and the services available to them in a language they understand, including how to access legal aid, legal representatives, and legal advice. For child potential victims, the UK has piloted the Independent Child Trafficking Service, which provides specialist modern slavery support to children in line with the child's needs and vulnerabilities.
- In order to strengthen efforts to ensure compliance with the non-punishment provision, the UK Government has taken action in light of the European Court of Human Rights ruling in 2021 in the case of VCL and AN v UK 2009. Relevant organisations, including police and prosecution services across the UK, have provided training and revised guidance to raise awareness amongst police and prosecutors. Prosecutor guidance has also been revised to reflect the findings of the judgment. This aims to prevent wrongful prosecution of victims of modern slavery.
- The Nationality and Borders Act 2022 brought into primary legislation the rights of victims, including eligibility for temporary permission to stay in the UK.

Thank you for the opportunity to present at today's meeting; we remain grateful for your ongoing commitment in this area and will endeavour to submit our report after the general election.