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Universal periodic review

Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review*

Bulgaria

* The annex is being circulated without formal editing, in the language of submission only.



Introduction

1. The Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, established in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 5/1, held its thirty-sixth session from 2 to 13 November 2020. The review of Bulgaria was held at the 9th meeting, on 6 November 2020. The delegation of Bulgaria was headed by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Georg Georgiev. At its 14th meeting, held on 10 November 2020, the Working Group adopted the report on Bulgaria.
2. On 14 January 2020, the Human Rights Council selected the following group of rapporteurs (troika) to facilitate the review of Bulgaria: Japan, Senegal and Slovakia.
3. In accordance with paragraph 15 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 and paragraph 5 of the annex to Council resolution 16/21, the following documents were issued for the review of Bulgaria:
 - (a) A national report submitted/written presentation made in accordance with paragraph 15 (a) (A/HRC/WG.6/36/BGR/1);
 - (b) A compilation prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in accordance with paragraph 15 (b) (A/HRC/WG.6/36/BGR/2);
 - (c) A summary prepared by OHCHR in accordance with paragraph 15 (c) (A/HRC/WG.6/36/BGR/3).
4. A list of questions prepared in advance by Belgium, Canada, Germany, Portugal, on behalf of the Group of Friends on national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uruguay was transmitted to Bulgaria through the troika. These questions are available on the website of the universal periodic review.

I. Summary of the proceedings of the review process

A. Presentation by the State under review

5. The delegation stated that Bulgaria had used previously received recommendations to advance human rights promotion and protection. Bulgaria was a party to the primary United Nations human rights conventions, and submitted reports regularly on their implementation.
6. Bulgaria became a member of the Human Rights Council in 2019. Its voluntary pledges focused on promoting the rights of the child; strengthening ethnic and religious tolerance; protecting the rights of migrants and refugees; and enhancing the rule of law, democracy and good governance. Bulgaria placed the human rights-based approach at the centre of its implementation strategy for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
7. Several ministries and State authorities had participated in the preparation of the universal periodic review report of Bulgaria, with the draft published online for broad public consultation. Comments by leading non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were reflected in the final version of the report, which was subsequently approved by the national coordination mechanism on human rights.
8. The main priorities of the Government's policies were the supremacy of the law and the strengthening of institutions. Mechanisms to monitor the implementation of recommendations and for one-time payment of compensations had been established. Bulgaria also cooperated with special procedures mandate holders, issuing a standing invitation.
9. In 2019, the Government founded a national committee for international humanitarian law to ensure incorporation into domestic legislation of related provisions. The Commission for Protection against Discrimination and the Ombudsman made efforts towards improving their systems for human rights protection, with governmental support. There was an increase

in the number of complaints filed owing to a high level of public trust. The Ombudsman was also accredited with A status in 2019.

10. Bulgaria was convinced that independence of the judiciary was a condition for the rule of law. The delegation asserted that the fight against corruption was a governmental priority and adoption of a new anti-corruption strategy for 2021–2027 was under way.

11. Bulgaria advanced protection of the rights of the child, with a focus on education. In 2018, a mechanism had been established to coordinate efforts on keeping children in school, with a resulting decrease in dropout levels among Roma pupils. Bulgaria was also active in sharing good practices by funding projects through official development assistance or with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). As a member of the Human Rights Council, Bulgaria has highlighted children with disabilities and inclusive education, and it worked to include the rights of children in the 2030 Agenda. Bulgaria continued its campaign for re-election to the Human Rights Council for the period 2024–2026.

12. With regard to persons with disabilities, Bulgaria was a party to related international documents and supported corresponding efforts of the Council of Europe. A number of new legal acts had been adopted to improve the quality of living of such persons.

13. Bulgaria had also improved its legislative base to promote gender equality and eliminate all forms of discrimination, having amended the Gender Equality Act, the Social Services Act and the Protection against Discrimination Act. In addition, it was implementing the National Gender Equality Strategy. In 2020, Bulgaria adopted its first action plan on the Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women, peace and security. This was a core component of its development assistance and humanitarian aid, and it contributed to domestic efforts.

14. On the topic of violence against women and girls, Bulgaria amended the Criminal Code and the Protection against Domestic Violence Act.

15. The delegation asserted that all religious denominations in Bulgaria were free and enjoyed equal rights. The Government had nominated a focal point on freedom of religion or belief at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It had also consistently and publicly denounced manifestations of antisemitism, xenophobia and hate speech. Bulgaria had become a member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, and a national coordinator for combating antisemitism had been assigned. A number of public events had been organized to give a clear signal that expressing and promoting hatred would not be tolerated.

16. Hate crimes, including hate speech, were addressed in the Criminal Code, and Bulgaria is in the process of amending the Radio and Television Act to reflect the newly adopted European Union Audiovisual Media Services Directive.

17. Bulgaria stated that the country had a solid record for creating conditions of understanding and tolerance among persons living in Bulgaria of various ethnic, cultural or social backgrounds. The legal aid framework had been supplemented and amended several times to guarantee access to legal aid for a wider range of vulnerable social groups. In the last few years, Bulgaria had organized training activities and seminars in cooperation with the European Commission, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR).

18. With regard to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the delegation asserted that it could not be used as an excuse to avoid being vigilant about protecting human rights. Bulgaria had taken preventive measures to protect its citizens, and extra attention had been given to the country’s most vulnerable Roma communities.

19. Bulgaria had taken steps to improve the living conditions of asylum seekers, notably by building additional special centres for temporary accommodation. The country was committed to observing the rights of unaccompanied foreign children, and under its legislation, they had the same rights as Bulgarian children without parental care.

20. Within the interactive dialogue, the delegation noted that, regarding the use of mother tongue languages for elections, under the Bulgarian constitution, the election campaign was

to be conducted in Bulgarian, and that it could not accept recommendations concerning the so-called Turkish geographical places because they were not recognized in the country.

21. With respect to refugees and migrants, given its geographical position, Bulgaria protected the European Union external borders and applied the European Union acquis, national legislation, and the non-refoulement principle. With European Union financial support, Bulgaria had overcome difficulties in receiving a large number of migrants, asylum seekers, and unaccompanied children in 2015. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF and the International Organization for Migration had provided support, while the Bulgarian Red Cross and other NGOs had undertaken human rights monitoring of the border police.

22. There was a functioning sustainable mechanism for interaction between the competent authorities, established with the assistance of UNICEF. Unaccompanied children were not detained by the police, but immediately transferred either to the State Agency for Refugees (if they request protection) or to the social services (if they do not).

23. Migrants were temporarily accommodated in special homes for temporary accommodation of foreigners, until their document processing was finalized, and they were given access to legal representation and assistance. Respect for migrant rights was regularly monitored by the Ombudsman and NGOs. Administrative actions regarding detained persons were carried out in the presence of licensed interpreters and lawyers, and they could be appealed before judicial authorities.

24. In 2016, Bulgaria introduced a national procedure for determining and granting statelessness status, with the assistance of UNHCR. Since 2017, the Migration Directorate has granted such status to 115 stateless persons.

25. With regard to domestic violence, Bulgaria worked nationally and internationally to enhance police cooperation, and over 150 initiatives were implemented by the police and judiciary in cooperation with NGOs. Nearly 2,000 police officers had attended associated courses.

26. On the subject of hate crimes, Bulgaria provided trainings for the police and prosecution officers on non-discrimination issues, and the Training against Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement programme of OSCE/ODIHR was implemented. Training was provided for police officers working in multi-ethnic environments. The police also held meetings with local authorities, representatives of ethnic communities and relevant NGOs. In 2018, Bulgaria introduced a new element in the anti-discrimination training, which was focused on the investigation of hate crimes based on homophobia and was organized with civil society.

27. With respect to police violence, there were regulations on police work with detainees, and in 2016, the Code of Conduct for Civil Servants in the Ministry of Interior was amended, highlighting respect for rights regarding torture. Under the Penal Code, all cases of crimes committed by Ministry officials were investigated by judicial authorities, independent of the police.

28. With regard to media freedom, the delegation stated that attacks against journalists were immediately and fully investigated, and there was collaboration with international partners, including the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and Council of Europe.

29. On the topic of independence of the judiciary, legislative changes had led to more transparency and accountability in the process of appointing magistrates and ensuring their independence. Changes had been introduced in the structure and organization of the Supreme Judicial Council. The right to a fair procedure was guaranteed through the use of random selection for the distribution of cases when convening the disciplinary panel. Amendments to the Judiciary System Act in 2020 also specified procedures for dismissing judges, prosecutors and investigators. From 2017, the Government had also put in place a monitoring and reporting cycle on progress in implementing the judicial reform strategy. New opportunities for accountability and transparency in the work of the Prosecutor General and the Prosecutor's Office had been developed, and effective law enforcement had been ensured.

30. For the fight against corruption, Bulgaria implemented the main international anti-corruption instruments of the Council of Europe, the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and relevant European Union conventions and acts. Reforms of the institutional framework included the commission for combating corruption and confiscation of illegally acquired property, while the mandate of the Specialized Prosecutor's Office and Specialized Criminal Court had been expanded with regard to high-level corruption. A national council for anti-corruption policies coordinated national policies and reported on the implementation of the national anti-corruption strategy.

31. With respect to countering violence against women and domestic violence, Bulgaria had a robust legislative framework. There were legal mechanisms in place for victim defence, compensation and protection services. All forms of domestic violence had been criminalized, and measures had been adopted to prosecute and penalize perpetrators. Methodological guidance of the Prosecutor General had been developed for the work of police authorities in cases of domestic violence. In line with the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, problematic criminal provisions had been revoked. Following the 2019 visits of two United Nations special rapporteurs, including the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, and the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Bulgaria had adopted targeted measures that were aligned with their recommendations. Bulgaria allocated financial resources annually to implement related programmes.

32. The delegation declared that, owing to constitutional constraints, Bulgaria was not in a position to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).

33. With regard to discrimination and hate speech, Bulgaria had joined the key relevant international legal instruments. The Constitution prohibited discrimination, and this was the underlying principle in domestic legislation. The Protection against Discrimination Act provided a legal framework to protect every citizen from direct or indirect discrimination on all grounds recognized in international legal instruments, including sexual orientation. With respect to explicit criminalization of violence on the grounds of sexual orientation, although the Criminal Code did not contain any qualified *corpus delicti* in cases of crimes motivated by homophobia or transphobia, these factors could be taken into account as aggravating circumstances in determining the penalty.

34. A working group at the Ministry of Justice drafted legislative amendments on juvenile justice, including a draft law on correctional measures for juveniles, for which debates were ongoing.

35. In terms of social policy, the efforts of the Government in the previous months had been focused on the COVID-19 pandemic. Initial emphasis had been on providing support to the health system and to the most vulnerable groups, and on mobilizing support for the economy. The Government had implemented short-term working arrangement schemes, and it had mobilized assistance to companies in order to support people who had lost their jobs, including short-term arrangements subsidizing the minimum wage.

36. Special attention was given to families, with social benefits to support the parents' loss of income. New social assistance for children at the eighth grade level provided support for families with school needs. For families with children at home, Bulgaria introduced monthly assistance based on the minimum wage.

37. For older persons, the Government mobilized European funding to provide patronage carers to visit older persons and people with disabilities. Since August 2020, all retired persons have been receiving an additional 50 Bulgarian lev in their monthly pension.

38. In 2020, Bulgaria was in the process of closing the last institutions for children. The Government had established more community services, more networks of foster families and better-targeted integration measures to keep children in families. Over 60 community centres were providing integrated health, social and medical services. The new Social Services Act provided better-targeted, quality social services.

39. Under the new People with Disabilities Act, nearly 650,000 adults with permanent disabilities received financial support for personal assistance, employment and other

incentives to ensure their full inclusion. The Government was implementing a long-term care strategy, with a 2018–2021 action plan, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The plan's focus was a smooth transition from institutional care to home-based and community services. New day-care centres were being established for people with disabilities and their families, including for the social rehabilitation of persons with mental disorders. Local authorities were also providing integrated health and social mobile services for people with disabilities and older persons.

40. With regard to gender equality, maternity leave in Bulgaria was one of the longest in Europe. Bulgaria was also introducing incentives to support parents in employment, including childcare assistance provided by the Labour offices.

41. With regard to education, a number of legal regulations and other normative acts were enacted in 2020 to improve the quality of education and tackle early dropout cases, including the Regulation of Inclusive Education and amendments of the Regulation on the Budget. These regulations introduced obligatory preschool education starting at the age of four, and required all educational institutions to apply an individual approach to those who were in need or were from vulnerable groups, including socioeconomically disadvantaged groups and the Roma community. To implement these measures in full, additional funding from the budget was allocated.

42. Bulgaria also introduced educational mentors, who were provided with protective equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic. The mentors worked with the 10 per cent of pupils who were unable to participate in distance learning. The Government was prioritizing investments in digital means, targeting those from vulnerable groups.

43. The delegation thanked all Member States for their interest, constructive spirit and active participation in the review. It stated that all relevant Bulgarian institutions and stakeholders would be informed about the discussion and recommendations received. Bulgaria would continue its efforts on the issues covered.

B. Interactive dialogue and responses by the State under review

44. During the interactive dialogue, 91 delegations made statements. Recommendations made during the dialogue are to be found in section II of the present report.

45. Israel commended the adoption of the national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the national action plan for the promotion of equality between women and men.

46. Italy appreciated implementation of the national plan for integration of the Roma community and measures towards social inclusion and sustainable integration of minorities.

47. Japan appreciated that Bulgaria implemented the national strategy for the promotion of equality between women and men, and Criminal Code amendments to combat domestic violence.

48. Jordan welcomed the national report of Bulgaria as a sign of its commitment to promote human rights for all persons on its territory.

49. Kazakhstan welcomed amendments to the law on foreigners and the statelessness determination procedure. It also welcomed the prohibition of the short-term detention of unaccompanied children, and the introduction of alternatives to detention for irregular migrants.

50. Kyrgyzstan commended Bulgaria on the national programme for the prevention of violence and abuse of children, and Criminal Code amendments to protect victims of violence.

51. The Lao People's Democratic Republic hailed achievements through the national strategies of Bulgaria in the areas of gender equality, children's rights and the rights of persons with disabilities.

52. Lebanon commended Bulgaria on acceding to a range of international human rights conventions and the ranking of its national human rights institution.
53. Libya appreciated the efforts of Bulgaria to implement many of the recommendations made during the previous universal periodic review cycle.
54. Liechtenstein welcomed the statement and national report of Bulgaria, as well as the efforts made to implement recommendations from the last universal periodic review cycle.
55. Luxembourg highlighted the positive developments during the period under review, in particular the granting of A-status accreditation to the Ombudsman.
56. Malaysia praised the national action plan for the promotion of equality between women and men and the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings.
57. Maldives commended the progress made to promote gender equality, and the A-status accreditation of the Ombudsman's office in Bulgaria.
58. Malta welcomed efforts aimed at combating domestic violence, religious intolerance and hate crimes, and it also welcomed the appointment of a focal point for the European Governmental LGBTI Focal Points Network.
59. Mauritius congratulated Bulgaria for the establishment of crisis centres for women victims of domestic violence and encouraged it to pursue these initiatives.
60. Mexico recognized the adherence of Bulgaria to the principles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
61. Montenegro recognized the actions undertaken to encourage the integration of the Roma community into society, and welcomed Criminal Code amendments protecting the rights of victims of violence.
62. Morocco praised the presentation of eight national reports to the United Nations treaty bodies since the last universal periodic review of Bulgaria. It also commended the invitations made to special procedures mandate holders.
63. Myanmar welcomed the adoption of the national action plan for the promotion of equality between women and men and amendments to the Anti-Trafficking Act.
64. Nepal commended legal and institutional frameworks establishing economic opportunities for women, and measures for maintaining the necessary conditions in detention facilities for foreigners.
65. The Netherlands deemed it as a positive development that Bulgaria had improved civil and socioeconomic human rights, and noted that such improvements should be irreversible and sustainable.
66. Nigeria applauded efforts in combating human trafficking; protecting victims' rights; countering corruption and organized crime; and fighting racism, hate speech and hate crimes.
67. North Macedonia welcomed the ratification of several international human rights instruments and the adoption of the national action plan for the promotion of equality between women and men.
68. Norway noted progress made since the last universal periodic review cycle, including the signing or ratification of a number of protocols.
69. Pakistan commended steps to protect women's rights, including Criminal Code amendments to empower women. It also noted efforts to counter racial discrimination, hate speech, xenophobia and intolerance.
70. The Philippines recognized the progress of Bulgaria in implementing its human rights obligations, and welcomed the A-status accreditation of the Ombudsman, in compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).
71. Poland commended the efforts of Bulgaria to alleviate the socioeconomic situation of the Roma community, and noted that there remained room for improvement.

72. Portugal welcomed the measures taken by Bulgaria to empower children with disabilities through inclusive education and to combat institutionalization.
73. Qatar noted efforts to eradicate poverty and strengthen the rights of children and persons with disabilities. It also noted the granting of A-status accreditation to the Ombudsman.
74. The Republic of Moldova commended Bulgaria for promoting gender equality, including its national strategy for the promotion of equality between women and men.
75. Romania noted with satisfaction the human rights training provided for police officers, and saluted the measures for a broader realization of the right to education.
76. The Russian Federation expressed concern about hate speech and hate crimes, and the excessive use of force by law enforcement officials.
77. Senegal welcomed the national strategy for the deinstitutionalization of children and the national programme for the prevention of violence and abuse of children.
78. Slovakia recognized the efforts of Bulgaria to address human rights issues and praised it for numerous positive steps taken since its last universal periodic review.
79. Slovenia welcomed the participation of Bulgaria in an international OSCE project on effective criminal justice strategies and practices to combat gender-based violence in Eastern Europe.
80. Spain recognized recent legislative and institutional progress on the rights of persons with disabilities, protection against discrimination and the fight against antisemitism.
81. Sri Lanka appreciated the prioritization by Bulgaria of the rights of children with disabilities and of education, and noted the national strategy for poverty reduction and promotion of social inclusion for 2020.
82. The State of Palestine welcomed steps taken by the Government of Bulgaria to combat racism and xenophobia, including the increase in incidents involving hate speech and hate crime.
83. Sudan appreciated the efforts of Bulgaria to promote and protect human rights, manifested by its acceptance of 174 recommendations in the second universal periodic review cycle.
84. Sweden noted the reform efforts on the rule of law. Sweden was worried about the lack of continued reforms concerning the judicial system.
85. Switzerland noted that, despite the efforts undertaken, discrimination against the Roma minority continues.
86. Thailand commended Bulgaria for the A-status accreditation of the Ombudsman and for the national action plan for the promotion of equality between women and men.
87. Timor-Leste commended progress in the childcare system, particularly the deinstitutionalization process, and recognized the adoption of the Anti-Corruption and Forfeiture of Assets Act.
88. Togo welcomed the Ombudsman's A-status accreditation and the adoption of the Council of Europe Protocol No. 15 amending the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.
89. Tunisia commended the withdrawal by Bulgaria of its reservations on article 31 of the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons.
90. Turkey commended measures taken for the protection of mosques and other religious sites against acts of racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia.
91. Ukraine acknowledged the strengthening of the institutional and legislative base for gender equality, social services, the socioeconomic integration of vulnerable groups and the independence of the judiciary.

92. The United Arab Emirates welcomed the 2019 law on services, and the long-term care strategy for children, the elderly and persons with disabilities.
93. The United Kingdom welcomed efforts to address overcrowding of prisons and gender-based violence under criminal law. It remained concerned that changes to the scope of sexual assault offences had not yet been made.
94. The United States noted the efforts of Bulgaria to improve educational opportunities for the Roma community, and encouraged further action to combat discrimination in society and in the workforce.
95. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela stated that Bulgaria faced increasing gender-based violence, racism and hate speech against migrants and other vulnerable groups.
96. Afghanistan welcomed progress made in school attendance and in the reform of the childcare system. It remained concerned about incidents of hate speech and hate crime.
97. Albania commended improvements with regard to the protection of children's and women's rights. It welcomed the policy of social protection and promotion of employment.
98. Argentina reiterated treaty body concerns regarding discrimination, xenophobia and hate speech against asylum seekers, refugees, immigrants, ethnic and religious minorities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons.
99. Australia commended the A-status accreditation of the Ombudsman of Bulgaria and the efforts made towards effective prosecution of crime and corruption. It expressed concern regarding hate crimes.
100. Austria commended efforts at eliminating discrimination against Roma, and noted that the community still faced challenges regarding housing, education, health care and employment.
101. Azerbaijan acknowledged measures with regard to the rights of the child and persons with disabilities, as well as measures to combat human trafficking and ensure gender equality.
102. Bahamas commended the Ombudsman's A-status accreditation and the adoption of Criminal Code amendments to protect the rights of victims of violence.
103. Bahrain commended the role of Bulgaria in advancing women's rights and in fighting discrimination and violence against women and children.
104. Belarus noted measures taken by Bulgaria to improve further both legislation and State institutions in the area of human rights.
105. Belgium noted that there was room for improvement, in particular regarding gender-based violence, and discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
106. Brazil praised measures to ensure women's and children's rights, and to amend the Criminal Code to include domestic violence as an aggravating circumstance.
107. Burkina Faso encouraged the Government of Bulgaria to continue its efforts to ensure more effective human rights protection.
108. Cambodia commended efforts by Bulgaria to promote gender equality, advance freedom of religion and belief and protect the rights of migrant children.
109. Canada welcomed steps addressing gender-based violence, but was concerned about limitations on freedom of expression, and about pluralism and transparency of ownership in the media sector.
110. Chile hailed judicial reform efforts made to ensure independence of the judiciary, and legal and institutional measures promoting the political and economic participation of women.
111. China recognized progress made in fighting domestic violence, advancing gender equality, developing education and creating jobs. However, it was concerned about discrimination against minority groups.

112. Croatia commended adoption of the Anti-Corruption Act, including steps guaranteeing protection against prosecution for whistle-blowers and civil society activists.
113. Cuba thanked the delegation of Bulgaria for the presentation of its national report, and praised the country's commitment to the universal periodic review mechanism.
114. Cyprus commended Bulgaria on accepting most recommendations from the previous universal periodic review cycle, notably on submitting a report for the global review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
115. Czechia appreciated the efforts made to combat discrimination against minorities, including on the basis of ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation, but it noted incidents of hate speech and hate crime.
116. Denmark congratulated Bulgaria on its Persons with Disabilities Act of 2019, which provided a legal framework to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities.
117. The Dominican Republic commended the national plan of action for the promotion of gender equality and welcomed measures to eradicate violence against children.
118. Egypt welcomed the policies of Bulgaria for social cohesion and job opportunities. It also welcomed efforts to combat hate speech and to protect places of worship.
119. Ethiopia hailed the deinstitutionalization of care for children, the elderly and persons with disabilities, and a proposed amendment enhancing procedural guarantees for asylum seekers.
120. Fiji commended the enhanced legislative framework to protect the rights of victims of violence and the adoption of the national action plan on gender equality.
121. France welcomed the 2018 adoption of the Anti-Corruption and Forfeiture of Assets Act and urged continued efforts to combat violence against women.
122. Georgia commended the Government of Bulgaria and its parliament for supporting the Ombudsman, which was granted A-status accreditation in 2019, in compliance with the Paris Principles.
123. Germany commended Bulgaria for its efforts to implement human rights for migrants and refugees.
124. Greece welcomed adoption of the national action plan for the promotion of equality between women and men, and recognized the efforts of Bulgaria in fighting corruption.
125. Haiti noted the efforts made to improve the right to education, provide better protection for persons with disabilities and combat domestic violence.
126. The Holy See welcomed the efforts of Bulgaria in promoting human rights while addressing religious intolerance and discrimination, issues related to migration and asylum seekers, and the protection of vulnerable people.
127. Honduras congratulated Bulgaria on its progress in implementing previous universal periodic recommendations, including constitutional amendments and Penal Code provisions regarding domestic violence.
128. Iceland welcomed the delegation of Bulgaria, its national report and the steps outlined therein, and hoped for their continued implementation.
129. India noted the national action plan for the promotion of equality between women and men, and the measures therein, especially for unemployed women.
130. Indonesia recognized the granting of A-status accreditation for the Ombudsman of Bulgaria, and it welcomed efforts made in juvenile justice for reintegration through education.
131. Iran was concerned about vandalism in places of worship and discrimination against religious and minority groups.
132. Iraq appreciated the efforts of Bulgaria to enhance gender equality and combat racism and hate crimes, and also expressed appreciation for its adoption of the Social Service Law.

133. Ireland welcomed new legislation on providing social services, which it deemed an important step in protecting society's most vulnerable members.

II. Conclusions and/or recommendations

134. The following recommendations will be examined by Bulgaria, which will provide responses in due time, but no later than the forty-sixth session of the Human Rights Council.

134.1 Consider ratifying those international human rights treaties it has not yet ratified, in particular the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, and accelerate ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (Slovakia);

134.2 Ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (France) (Iraq) (Senegal) (Togo) (Ukraine);

134.3 Consider the possibility of ratifying the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (Argentina); Maintain efforts towards the ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (Chile); Consider ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (Costa Rica);

134.4 Sign and ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Honduras); Consider ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Philippines);

134.5 Ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Sri Lanka) (Togo);

134.6 Ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and thus strengthen legislation to combat gender-based violence (Cyprus); Ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) (Denmark); Ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (France); Complete the process of ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Iceland); Reconsider its decision not to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Spain);

134.7 Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (Honduras);

134.8 Consider ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Costa Rica); Expedite the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Thailand);

134.9 Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (Maldives); Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (Switzerland);

134.10 Maintain efforts towards the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communication procedure (Chile);

- 134.11 **Foresee the signing and ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Senegal);**
- 134.12 **Finalize the procedure of full accession to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (Ukraine);**
- 134.13 **Sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (Honduras);**
- 134.14 **Ratify the amendments to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court on the crime of aggression (Liechtenstein);**
- 134.15 **Adopt an open, merit-based process when selecting national candidates for United Nations treaty body elections (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland);**
- 134.16 **Continue its efforts in bringing its national legislation into line with its international obligations (Kyrgyzstan);**
- 134.17 **Strengthen the national human rights institution and ensure its compliance with the Paris Principles (Egypt); Strengthen the capacity and financial resources of the Ombudsman and bring it into full compliance with the Paris Principles (Germany); Take the necessary measures to ensure that the country's national institutions for human rights are in accordance with the Paris Principles (Kazakhstan);**
- 134.18 **Continue its efforts to combat discrimination and xenophobia, including by introducing legislative measures to prohibit hate speech (Liechtenstein);**
- 134.19 **Ensure that any call to incite ethnic or racial discrimination, hostility or violence is prohibited in law, and that those responsible for such calls are held accountable for their actions (Luxembourg);**
- 134.20 **Amend the law on protection against discrimination so that gender identity is expressly included among the grounds for discrimination and that same-sex couples are placed on an equal footing with others (Luxembourg);**
- 134.21 **Raise public awareness on respect for diversity and undertake legislative reforms to further address intolerance and hate speech (Malaysia);**
- 134.22 **Include explicitly in law gender identity as a ground for discrimination, as well as fully recognize equality for homosexual couples (Mexico);**
- 134.23 **Intensify the fight against racism, intolerance and hate crimes by organizing training workshops on topics related to police actions in multi-ethnic circles, human rights and minority issues (Morocco);**
- 134.24 **Scale up efforts in combating racism, racial discrimination and hate crimes (Nigeria);**
- 134.25 **Actively denounce and increase action to prevent racist, homophobic and xenophobic rhetoric in the public sphere, including against Roma and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons (Norway);**
- 134.26 **Continue to take steps to counter racial discrimination both through awareness-raising and other preventive measures (Pakistan);**
- 134.27 **Intensify efforts in human rights education and training to address racism, intolerance and hate crimes against minority groups and other vulnerable groups (Philippines);**
- 134.28 **Ensure that all cases of hate speech, hate crimes and discrimination against religious groups are investigated and sanctioned and to this end, revise the draft legislation in conformity with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Poland);**

- 134.29 **Take concrete measures to combat incidents of ethnic or racially motivated violence and hatred, including against migrants and refugees, and ensure that advocacy or incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence is prohibited by law and that breaches are investigated and perpetrators held accountable (Portugal);**
- 134.30 **Strengthen the protection of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, inter alia by including sexual orientation and gender identity as grounds for hate crimes, recognize civil partnerships of same-sex couples and ban non-consensual surgeries on intersex persons (Portugal);**
- 134.31 **Continue to strengthen the efforts aimed at improving access to employment, education, social and health services and at overcoming negative stereotypes, hate speech and discrimination (Romania);**
- 134.32 **Introduce amendments to the national legislation to include a definition of hate speech (Russian Federation);**
- 134.33 **Investigate cases of violence and crime based on race, and bring those responsible to justice (Russian Federation);**
- 134.34 **Amend national legislation related to the elimination of racial discrimination and hate speech in line with international standards and bring perpetrators to justice (Slovakia);**
- 134.35 **Raise public awareness on respect for diversity (Slovakia);**
- 134.36 **Amend national legislation to include a definition of hate speech in line with the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, investigate racially motivated violent acts and crimes, prosecute and punish perpetrators and raise public awareness on respect for diversity (Slovenia);**
- 134.37 **Strengthen legislation that exists in the area of anti-discrimination and explicitly mention gender identity as grounds for discrimination, and include in the Criminal Code specific crimes related to hate and incitement to hate based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sexual characteristics (Spain);**
- 134.38 **Take measures to prevent racist attacks, combat hate speech and crimes of extremism, especially against minorities, and ensure that all incidents are investigated, prosecuted and that perpetrators are punished (State of Palestine);**
- 134.39 **Strengthen the legislative and policy measures, and all other necessary measures, to fight intolerance and hate speech targeting minority, ethnic and religious groups (Sudan);**
- 134.40 **Address hate crimes, prohibit hate speech in the media and on social media platforms, prosecute those responsible and combat racism in all forms (Jordan);**
- 134.41 **Take effective measures to prevent racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance as well as to prevent and eradicate trafficking in human beings (Togo);**
- 134.42 **Continue efforts to combat intolerance, racism, and hate speech against foreigners, immigrants and minorities (Tunisia);**
- 134.43 **Commit to the principles of non-discrimination while ensuring equal opportunities for all citizens in implementing the announced social reforms (United Arab Emirates);**
- 134.44 **Amend the Criminal Code to widen the scope of the definition of hate crimes and speech to include sexual orientation (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland);**

- 134.45 Take effective measures to eradicate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela);
- 134.46 Strengthen measures aimed at combating discrimination in all its forms and guarantee the investigation and punishment of expressions of hatred against minority groups, including those made by members of some groups and political parties (Argentina);
- 134.47 Strengthen education on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex rights and legislate to protect against hate crimes against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons (Australia);
- 134.48 Legislate or amend the current Family Code in order to include civil partnership available to both different-sex and same-sex couples (Australia);
- 134.49 Take more effective measures to reduce inequalities and discrimination against minorities, migrants and refugees (Bahrain);
- 134.50 Improve the accessibility of effective remedies against any form of discrimination and take the necessary measures to protect vulnerable groups from hate speech and other hate crimes (Bahrain);
- 134.51 Implement the recommendations from the concluding observations of treaty bodies regarding the prohibition in law and in practice of any advocacy of ethnic or racial hatred and on prosecuting persons responsible for such behaviour towards minority groups (Belarus);
- 134.52 Amend relevant legislation and the Criminal Code to explicitly include sexual orientation and gender identity as hate motives and grounds of discrimination, and ensure that such hate crimes are effectively investigated and prosecuted (Belgium);
- 134.53 Ensure the investigation, prosecution and punishment of offences related to racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance, including the excessive use of force by law enforcement officials, against minority groups such as Roma, Muslims, Jews, people of African descent, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and members of sexual minorities (Brazil);
- 134.54 Conduct adequate investigations and prosecutions into incidents of hate speech with due regard to motives by requiring courts to regularly report, record and make public cases where hate speech or hate crimes have or have not been considered in court proceedings (Canada);
- 134.55 Ensure that all cases of hate speech and hate crime are promptly and effectively investigated, sanctioned and prosecuted (Czechia);
- 134.56 Combat discrimination and hate speech that target people owing to their ethnic or religious background or their sexual orientation and gender identity, and translate these provisions into the penal code (France);
- 134.57 Systematically condemn hate crimes and hate speech and ensure that all racially motivated offences are effectively investigated, prosecuted and sanctioned (Germany);
- 134.58 Strengthen activities and laws aimed at the elimination of discrimination in society, other intolerances and hate speech against minorities and other groups, including those based on sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics (Iceland);
- 134.59 Pass and implement laws that recognize same-sex partnerships and define the rights and obligations of cohabiting couples in same-sex unions (Iceland);
- 134.60 Step up efforts to tackle hate crime, hate speech and discriminatory conduct targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons through amending the Criminal Code to explicitly include hate crime on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity (Finland);

- 134.61 Strengthen efforts to eliminate discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity, actual or perceived, in compliance with its human rights obligations (Fiji);
- 134.62 Ensure that its policies, legislation, regulations and enforcement measures effectively serve to prevent and address the heightened risk of business involvement in abuses in conflict situations, which include situations of armed occupation (State of Palestine);
- 134.63 Intensify efforts to develop and strengthen the necessary legislative frameworks that address cross-sectoral environmental challenges, including climate change adaptation and mitigation frameworks (Fiji);
- 134.64 Ensure that women, children, persons with disabilities, and indigenous and local communities are meaningfully engaged in the development and implementation of climate change and disaster risk reduction policies (Fiji);
- 134.65 Continue its efforts to strengthen the protection of journalists against harassment, attack or excessive use of force, and to ensure accountability in that regard (Greece);
- 134.66 Amend the legislation by adopting a definition of torture, and criminalize torture in a manner fully compliant with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Maldives);
- 134.67 Combat prison overcrowding and strengthen health services for inmates (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela);
- 134.68 Align the legal framework for juvenile justice with international standards as recommended by the United Nations Children's Fund (Poland);
- 134.69 Pursue efforts to combat corruption and organized crime (Qatar);
- 134.70 Improve juvenile justice legislation and practice, and continue efforts for the reintegration of former child offenders into society in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Republic of Moldova);
- 134.71 Continue to align the legal framework for juvenile justice to the existing international standards and implement restorative justice approaches (Romania);
- 134.72 Continue to work on the reform of the juvenile justice system to align it with the main European and international standards on the issue (Spain);
- 134.73 Strengthen the rule of law by undertaking all necessary reforms in order to ensure a mechanism for accountability for the Office of the Prosecutor General (Sweden);
- 134.74 Continue its judicial reform, in accordance with targets 16.3 and 16.6 of the Sustainable Development Goals and in respect of the recommendations of the Venice Commission, by guaranteeing the independence of judges and prosecutors and by establishing effective control mechanisms (Switzerland);
- 134.75 Step up its efforts to ensure that the unlawful use of force by law enforcement officials is investigated (Timor-Leste);
- 134.76 Establish an independent oversight mechanism for police abuse (Russian Federation);
- 134.77 Complete alignment of the juvenile justice system with international standards (Ukraine);
- 134.78 Enact reforms to promote the independence of the judiciary and to eliminate corruption in the judicial system (United States of America);
- 134.79 Introduce the legal framework necessary to effectively investigate and prosecute persons engaged in high-level corruption (Denmark);

- 134.80 **Provide the necessary training for law enforcement officials on protecting and promoting human rights (Egypt);**
- 134.81 **Pursue reform of the judiciary, including by strengthening efforts to combat corruption (France);**
- 134.82 **Further continue structural reforms on constitutional and legislative levels, in order to solidify achieved progress in respect of the reform of the Supreme Judicial Council (Georgia);**
- 134.83 **Strengthen its efforts to promote good governance and transparency in line with national legislation, including the Anti-Corruption and Confiscation of Illegally Acquired Property Act (Indonesia);**
- 134.84 **Expedite the judicial process regarding the restitution of the waqf properties confiscated by the State in the totalitarian regime period (Turkey);**
- 134.85 **Ensure full and effective freedom of the media and protection of journalists and media operators (Italy);**
- 134.86 **Investigate all forms of attacks, threats and violence against journalists and ensure full accountability (Netherlands);**
- 134.87 **Implement measures to ensure a safe and independent working environment for journalists and media workers, and intensify efforts to diversity ownership of the media and promote public media independence (Norway);**
- 134.88 **Foster the development of diverse, vibrant and engaged civil society organizations (Norway);**
- 134.89 **Ensure freedom of expression and assembly and media pluralism, and take the necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of journalists (Republic of Moldova);**
- 134.90 **Adopt policies that encourage religious harmony and allow freedom of exercise of religious rights (Jordan);**
- 134.91 **Promote freedom of expression and media independence by requiring media ownership and transparency (United States of America);**
- 134.92 **Protect journalists against any form of harassment, attack or excessive use of force, promptly investigate such acts and bring those responsible to justice (Austria);**
- 134.93 **Investigate and hold to account those who threaten, intimidate and harm journalists, civil society and peaceful protesters, including the reporters who were injured in the protests in August 2020 in Sofia (Canada);**
- 134.94 **Put an end to political pressure on the media and combat violence against journalists (France);**
- 134.95 **Continue efforts aimed at enhancing freedom of religion and belief and curbing hate speech (Lebanon);**
- 134.96 **Ensure that all discrimination against religious groups is duly investigated and sanctioned, adopting all the necessary measures to protect fully places of worship and defend the exercise of religious freedom (Holy See);**
- 134.97 **Ensure compliance with laws requiring public disclosure of media ownership to improve transparency (Ireland);**
- 134.98 **Continue its efforts to combat trafficking in human beings and protect victims of trafficking (Liechtenstein);**
- 134.99 **Ensure the implementation of the national strategy to combat trafficking for the period 2017–2021 (Luxembourg);**
- 134.100 **Enhance its ongoing measures to prevent and combat trafficking in persons and address its root causes (Myanmar);**

- 134.101 Continue to implement measures to combat human trafficking and enhance protection for victims (Nepal);
- 134.102 Step up efforts to combat human trafficking, guarantee victims rights and provide them protection and assistance (Qatar);
- 134.103 Take effective measures to prevent and eradicate human trafficking, investigate all allegations of trafficking, and prosecute and punish perpetrators (Sri Lanka);
- 134.104 Improve the support available to victims of modern slavery, facilitating their reintegration into society through provision of appropriate health care and legal and financial support, and paying particular attention to support for child victims, including children in care institutions, Roma children and unaccompanied foreign minors (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland);
- 134.105 Strengthen its efforts directed at preventing and eradicating human trafficking (Azerbaijan);
- 134.106 Continue its efforts in strengthening its mechanisms in protecting all persons, including children, from human trafficking (Kyrgyzstan);
- 134.107 Increase further efforts to combat trafficking in persons, including by addressing the root causes and origins of trafficking, improving law enforcement practices as well as providing victims of trafficking with comprehensive protection and rehabilitation (Belarus);
- 134.108 Initiate, in view of the standing invitation, a visit to the country by the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children (Belarus);
- 134.109 Continue to strengthen the legal framework and implement policies to adequately protect victims of trafficking, sexual exploitation and domestic violence, especially women and children (Brazil);
- 134.110 Intensify cooperation and efforts to continue addressing human trafficking and smuggling with an emphasis on preventive and protective approaches (Cambodia);
- 134.111 Take effective measures to prevent and eradicate human trafficking by prosecuting and punishing perpetrators promptly (Cyprus);
- 134.112 Create a mechanism to identify potential victims of human trafficking by strengthening collaboration with relevant NGOs (Cyprus);
- 134.113 Strengthen efforts to ensure the effective implementation of the national anti-trafficking strategy, and ensure that the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings is provided with sufficient funds to carry out its functions (Fiji);
- 134.114 Continue to support the protection of workers' rights in the global supply chains, by strengthening the legal framework to address human trafficking, slavery and other related human rights abuses (Indonesia);
- 134.115 Continue efforts to prevent and eliminate human trafficking, prosecute and punish perpetrators, and provide support and protection for victims (Iraq);
- 134.116 Support, through appropriate economic and social policies, the institution of the family and the preservation of family values, including the protection and support of the family as a fundamental unit of society (Haiti);
- 134.117 Continue its efforts to address economic inequalities and to ensure economic, social and cultural rights for all, including ethnic minority groups (Thailand);

- 134.118 Ensure that social benefits reach those in need, and adopt targeted measures to keep children out of poverty to advance the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 1 (Afghanistan);
- 134.119 Extend beyond 2020 the national strategy for poverty reduction and the promotion of social inclusion, and include among its provisions the response to the health and socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (Cuba);
- 134.120 Ensure unhindered access to sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents (Luxembourg);
- 134.121 Allocate adequate resources to ensure full implementation of the national programme for improving mother and child health care (Malaysia);
- 134.122 Ensure equal access to affordable health care for all by reducing the disparity between regions (Japan);
- 134.123 Provide access to affordable health care for all, without discrimination (Republic of Moldova);
- 134.124 Allocate adequate resources to ensure full implementation of the national programme for improving mother and child health care (2014–2020) (Sri Lanka);
- 134.125 Take further measures to ensure access to affordable health care for all without discrimination (Azerbaijan);
- 134.126 Ensure safe motherhood for all women (Burkina Faso);
- 134.127 Guarantee access for all women, including those who do not have health insurance, to health services during pregnancy and childbirth (Burkina Faso);
- 134.128 Implement the commitment undertaken at the Nairobi conference, to guarantee safe motherhood for all women, including those who do not have health insurance, and access to health services during pregnancy and childbirth (Costa Rica);
- 134.129 Take steps to reduce the health-care gap between different regions of the country (Dominican Republic);
- 134.130 Invest in high-quality health-care services, including for sexual and reproductive health, as well as in health technologies for early diagnostics and prevention (Iceland);
- 134.131 Support the social services and provide health care, especially for the most vulnerable people in society, within the framework of the national strategic plans (Libya);
- 134.132 Continue its efforts to improve equality in education, including for Roma children, and in rural areas (Nepal);
- 134.133 Ensure equal and quality education for all by continuing to address the issue of school dropout and improving access to quality education, regardless of a person's ethnicity and region (Japan);
- 134.134 Take corrective measures to combat school dropouts, considering that one of the root causes of human trafficking is extreme poverty (Cyprus);
- 134.135 Safeguard and promote the fundamental right to education, thus ensuring inclusive access to schools and effectively combating school dropout, particularly with regard to Roma and migrant children, and children in rural areas and within refugee centres (Holy See);
- 134.136 Take necessary measures to ensure access to good quality education for children and students, based on equality and non-discrimination (Libya);
- 134.137 Pursue efforts to reduce the gap in education levels between cities and small villages (Albania);

- 134.138 Promote the employment of women in fields where they remain underrepresented and continue efforts to address the wage gap between men and women (Malaysia);
- 134.139 Continue efforts to narrow the gender pay gap by encouraging equal pay for equal work (Myanmar);
- 134.140 Sustain steps to promote girls' rights to education and women's empowerment (Pakistan);
- 134.141 Continue efforts to provide employment and training opportunities for women and empower them in accordance with the national action plan to promote equality between women and men (United Arab Emirates);
- 134.142 Continue with the implementation of the national action plan for the promotion of equality between women and men, including through measures aimed at empowering women in all spheres (Azerbaijan);
- 134.143 Continue taking additional steps to increase women's representation in the parliament, government and municipalities (Cambodia);
- 134.144 Continue to promote gender equality, including rural development policies (Lao People's Democratic Republic);
- 134.145 Adopt adequately coordinated and funded community awareness activities and programmes, targeting men and boys, and aimed at changing attitudes and promoting positive masculine norms, including through the use of social media (Haiti);
- 134.146 Continue its ongoing efforts to combat all forms of discrimination against women and girls, address the phenomenon of domestic violence, and empower women and integrate them into economic life (Libya);
- 134.147 Step up the efforts in eliminating violence against women and girls (Israel);
- 134.148 Take effective measures to combat sexual and gender-based violence, including by explicitly prohibiting domestic violence and marital rape (Liechtenstein);
- 134.149 Continue to provide adequate funding for shelters, counselling, legal aid and other social services for victims of domestic violence and their children (Malta);
- 134.150 Criminalize all forms of domestic violence, not only systemic forms of violence, and include marital rape in the Criminal Code (Germany);
- 134.151 Criminalize domestic violence and marital rape (Mexico);
- 134.152 Continue deploying necessary efforts for the prevention and punishment of domestic violence, in particular the amendments adopted to the Criminal Code to regulate the protection of the rights of victims of violence, including within the family (Morocco);
- 134.153 Take appropriate measures to combat discrimination and violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, and ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Italy);
- 134.154 Ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and strengthen its efforts to combat domestic violence (Norway);
- 134.155 Improve access to address violence against women, including domestic violence (Philippines);
- 134.156 Ratify and implement the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

(Istanbul Convention), as doing so would reinforce the State's ability to combat gender-based violence and domestic violence (Slovenia);

134.157 Continue efforts to fight discrimination against women and put an end to all forms of violence against them (Tunisia);

134.158 Reinforce the State's ability to combat gender-based violence and domestic violence (Kazakhstan);

134.159 Promote equal rights and protections for women and members of minority groups, especially Roma, by revising domestic violence legislation and eliminating discrimination in education and employment (United States of America);

134.160 Take effective measures to combat gender-based violence, sexual harassment and rape, and guarantee a timely response to complaints, and security and access to justice for victims (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela);

134.161 Create and implement a national system to collect verified statistical data on cases of domestic violence and ensure the accountability of perpetrators (Albania);

134.162 Take steps to eliminate gender-based violence, including by ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and increasing support to NGO-run crisis centres (Australia);

134.163 Remove the requirement related to article 93 of the Criminal Code that survivors have to prove three prior incidents of domestic violence before criminal charges are filed against perpetrators (Austria);

134.164 Increase State-funded shelters available to survivors of gender-based and domestic violence and their children, and provide support to NGOs offering shelter and other forms of support (Austria);

134.165 Commence a widespread educational campaign on domestic violence (Bahamas);

134.166 Increase funding to provide shelter and support for victims of domestic violence (Bahamas);

134.167 Further strengthen mechanisms at the national level to prevent and protect all victims of domestic violence (Kyrgyzstan);

134.168 Amend its legislation to recognize all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls, and facilitate access to justice to ensure that such violence can be prosecuted (Belgium);

134.169 Improve enforcement of laws criminalizing rape, including by conducting thorough investigations, compiling statistical data and prosecuting all acts of gender-based violence (Canada);

134.170 Introduce systematic capacity-building for judges, prosecutors, police and other law enforcement officers on the application of criminal law provisions on gender-based violence against women (Croatia);

134.171 Further amend the Criminal Code to explicitly include marital rape (Czechia);

134.172 Strengthen State-funded crisis centres and effective protection orders by its next universal periodic review (Czechia);

134.173 Continue strengthening existing legislation in the area of combating violence against women (Georgia);

134.174 Refrain from demolishing Roma settlements without offering alternatives, such as providing adequate social housing to Roma families (Germany);

- 134.175 Continue developing policies to prevent cases of domestic violence (Greece);
- 134.176 Amend its Criminal Code to include marital rape and domestic violence as specific crimes, and ensure the definition of rape is fully in line with international standards (Ireland);
- 134.177 Continue to strengthen the legislative framework and its implementation on violence against women and domestic violence, ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and amend the national legislation to correspond to international standards (Finland);
- 134.178 Take further steps to update the national strategy for the child that supports development and investment in community-based and family-based care for children (Malta);
- 134.179 Strengthen efforts to reduce child-related offences (Mauritius);
- 134.180 Hold targeted consultations with families, children and civil society organizations to strengthen measures for reducing child poverty (Sri Lanka);
- 134.181 Redouble its efforts to reduce child poverty (Timor-Leste);
- 134.182 Consider amending the Family Code and removing the exceptions that allow marriage under the age of 18 (Ukraine);
- 134.183 Continue to improve the quality of life of children through the development of education, health and social services systems in accordance with the principle of guaranteeing equal access to all children, including children with disabilities (Lao People's Democratic Republic);
- 134.184 Pursue efforts aimed at reducing child poverty in order to ensure a life of dignity for children (Dominican Republic);
- 134.185 Continue its efforts to guarantee the right of children to a family environment and access to quality care and services (Ethiopia);
- 134.186 Strengthen efforts to prevent crimes against children and to protect the rights of children (India);
- 134.187 Take further steps for the inclusion of minorities, including by strengthening the provision of education and health-care services to members of minorities (Israel);
- 134.188 Pursue efforts to address prejudice, intolerance and discrimination against the Roma population and to ensure its greater inclusion in society (Montenegro);
- 134.189 Strengthen the efforts to prevent any form of discrimination against persons belonging to minorities or vulnerable groups (Italy);
- 134.190 Ensure equal access of the Roma community to health-care, education and labour structures, in line with the national Roma integration strategy, and share visible results (Netherlands);
- 134.191 Take further steps to ensure access to services by minority and vulnerable groups, especially in the areas of housing, education, health care and employment (Philippines);
- 134.192 In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, avoid any discrimination of the Roma population in the imposition of quarantines, and ensure that the Roma community has sufficient means of subsistence and access to health services (Spain);
- 134.193 Strengthen the protection system for vulnerable groups, including racial and religious minorities (Jordan);

- 134.194 **Implement its obligations under the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Switzerland);**
- 134.195 **Implement targeted measures for the inclusion of Roma in society, in particular in the areas of housing, education and health (Switzerland);**
- 134.196 **Continue efforts to promote economic and social integration of minorities, especially the Roma (Tunisia);**
- 134.197 **Prosecute the individuals who committed crimes against minorities under the communist regime, and ensure that justice is served in the protracted case of the Belene concentration camp, as most of the victims are very old (Turkey);**
- 134.198 **Implement strategies and action plans for the integration of Roma people and initiatives to address their socioeconomic problems (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela);**
- 134.199 **Further increase preschool attendance among Roma and decrease dropout rates at all school levels (Austria);**
- 134.200 **Strengthen public policies designed to improve the social, cultural and economic situation, including the elimination of all forms of discrimination against the Roma population residing in the country (Chile);**
- 134.201 **Adopt effective legislative and administrative measures to combat racial discrimination and xenophobia against ethnic minority groups (China);**
- 134.202 **Adopt targeted measures to combat intersecting forms of discrimination against Roma women and girls, including with regard to access to education, employment, health care, housing and other social services (Croatia);**
- 134.203 **Continue to improve the legal framework and public policies to guarantee protection of the rights of vulnerable social groups, especially ethnic minorities (Cuba);**
- 134.204 **Ensure that the Roma are able to exercise their right to education, employment and housing (France);**
- 134.205 **Continue efforts aimed at strengthening the rights of minorities, by facilitating their social inclusion (Lebanon);**
- 134.206 **Guarantee the non-discrimination of members and institutions of religious minorities, which includes the application of principle of equality before the law in legislation and regulations (Holy See);**
- 134.207 **Promote and protect the rights of the Roma community from suffering marginalization and discrimination, especially in areas of housing, education, health care and employment (Islamic Republic of Iran);**
- 134.208 **Intensify efforts to ensure that Roma communities, particularly those affected by the mandatory COVID-19-related quarantines, have access to public health services and information, adequate water and sanitation, as well as provisions of food, medicines, hygiene products and health care, with specific consideration given to the needs of women and girls (Finland);**
- 134.209 **Ensure that individuals encounter no obstacles on the use and recognition of their names (Turkey);**
- 134.210 **Take necessary steps to make sure that local governments refrain from replacing the names of Turkish geographical places with Bulgarian ones, as was recently done by the Stara Zagora Municipal Council by replacing 838 Turkish geographical place names (Turkey);**
- 134.211 **Change its legislation to allow political campaigning in mother tongue as prescribed in the OSCE report dated 2017 (Turkey);**

- 134.212 Promote the enrolment of children and young people with disabilities in mainstream education, and gather statistical data on this, to measure progress (Mexico);
- 134.213 Continue improving the accessibility of services for women and girls with disabilities exposed to gender-based violence (Montenegro);
- 134.214 Develop alternative methods of support for persons with mental health conditions and psychosocial disabilities with respect to their rights, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including combating institutionalization, stigma, coercion and overmedication, and provide mental health services promoting inclusion in the community and respecting free and informed consent (Portugal);
- 134.215 Further promote the rights of persons with disabilities by improving access of children with disabilities to inclusive education and by accelerating care in the community (Japan);
- 134.216 Take the necessary steps to complete the process of ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) (Austria);
- 134.217 Adopt concrete measures to ensure all reasonable accommodations and respect for the human rights of persons with disabilities, as per the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Chile);
- 134.218 Adopt the draft bill on abolishing restrictions on the legal capacity of persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities (Costa Rica);
- 134.219 Further strengthen the supportive environment for access to quality education for children and students with special needs (Ethiopia);
- 134.220 Take further steps to ensure the enrolment of children and young people with disabilities in the mainstream education system (Greece);
- 134.221 Improve access to services and provide greater incentives for employment for people with a disability (Australia);
- 134.222 Ensure that detention of asylum seekers is only used as a measure of last resort and that provisions for alternative care are established for the entire family (Mexico);
- 134.223 Adopt further measures in combating human trafficking and protecting the rights of victims as well as the rights of migrants (Nigeria);
- 134.224 Investigate, prosecute and punish hate crimes against migrants and other vulnerable groups, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela);
- 134.225 Take measures to improve the conditions of reception centres for asylum seekers, including by providing adequate food and essential non-food items, with particular attention paid to the reception of children seeking international protection (Afghanistan);
- 134.226 Develop standard operating procedures for asylum seekers and refugees to assist with correctly identifying asylum seekers in particularly vulnerable situations and provide them with safe accommodation and adequate support (Bahamas);
- 134.227 Ensure that all unaccompanied minors are provided with a qualified legal guardian, and strengthen adequate social services for all migrant children, including the capacity and coordination of the national child protection system (Belgium);
- 134.228 Continue taking actions towards the further advancement of migrant children's rights to education (Cambodia);

134.229 **Stop implementing policies and measures that infringe upon the rights of migrants (China);**

134.230 **Adopt the necessary measures to combat racism, discrimination and racial violence, especially against migrant and refugee populations (Costa Rica);**

134.231 **Ensure access to the territory and the procedure for granting international protection, as well as full respect for the fundamental principle of non-refoulement, while promoting and facilitating alternatives to detention, and in this regard, devote special attention to children, making sure that no child is placed in detention (Holy See);**

134.232 **Continue to strengthen protection measures and provisions of basic services for migrants, particularly for migrant children, and to consider ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Indonesia);**

134.233 **Reinforce measures aimed at preventing and responding to racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance against asylum seekers and refugees (Islamic Republic of Iran).**

135. **All conclusions and/or recommendations contained in the present report reflect the position of the submitting State(s) and/or the State under review. They should not be construed as endorsed by the Working Group as a whole.**

Annex

Composition of the delegation

The delegation of Bulgaria was headed by Mr. Georg GEORGIEV, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and composed of the following members:

- Mr. Nikolay PRODANOV, Deputy Minister of Justice of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Mr. Milko BERNER, Deputy Minister of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Ms. Zornitsa ROUSINOVA, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Ms. Karina ANGELIEVA, Deputy Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Mr. Rumen DIMITROV, Deputy Minister of Culture of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Mr. Mincho KORALSKI, Director, Agency for People with Disabilities of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Ms. Maria SPASSOVA, Director, Human Rights Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Mr. Lyubomir TALEV, Director, Directorate „Council of Legislation”, Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Mr. Petar MILADINOV, Director, Directorate “International Cooperation, European Programmes and Regional Activities, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Ms. Rositsa IVANOVA, Secretary, Secretariat of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues at the Administration of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Ms. Marieta ANGYUSHEVA, Head of Section, Directorate „European Union and International Cooperation “, Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Ms. Ahavni TOPAKBASHIAN, State Expert, Secretariat of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues at the Administration of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Ms. Mirena TSENOVA, State Expert, “International Legal Cooperation and European Affairs” Directorate, Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Ms. Katya IVKOVA, State Expert, Directorate „European Coordination and International Cooperation “, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Ms. Emilia GEORGIEVA, State Expert, State Agency for Refugees of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Ms. Milena ANASTASOVA, State Expert, State Agency for Child Protection of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Mr. Yanko KOVACHEV, State Expert, State Agency for Child Protection of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Ms. Rayna DORMISHKOVA, Expert, Council for Electronic Media of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Ms. Stanimira PARAPUNOVA, Director, European Affairs and International Relations Directorate, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Ms. Genoveva NENOVA, Chargée d’Affaires a.i., Permanent Mission of the Republic of Bulgaria to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva;

- Ms. Kamelia PETROVA, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Bulgaria to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva.
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