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Summary record of the 4158th meeting*

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Chair: Ms. Abdo Rocholl

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* No summary records were issued for the 4156th and 4157th meetings.

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant
(continued)**

Third periodic report of Greece (CCPR/C/GRC/3; CCPR/C/GRC/QPR/3)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Greece joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Greece** said that, since the last periodic review, his Government had made significant progress in key areas, such as the protection of vulnerable groups, the promotion of gender equality, judicial reform, and the promotion of freedom of expression, assembly and association. Despite unprecedented challenges, it had maintained a steadfast commitment to improving the overall framework for protecting civil and political rights. The delegation looked forward to receiving the Committee's observations and recommendations, which would provide valuable guidance for achieving further improvements.
3. **A representative of Greece** said that her country's third periodic report (CCPR/C/GRC/3) had been prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with input from other relevant ministries and the Greek National Commission for Human Rights. Her Government was committed to addressing areas in which gaps or weaknesses in the implementation of the Covenant were identified during the review process. In the reporting period, Greece had had to navigate the combined effects of the economic downturn, the migration crisis and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The management of irregular migration, including cases of instrumentalized migration, had been particularly challenging, while prolonged austerity measures and the restrictive, though proportionate, measures necessitated by the pandemic had had far-reaching repercussions. However, the country was now on the path to long-term progress and sustainability, with human rights at the centre of its policies.
4. Progress on gender equality had included the ratification of several key international instruments, the formulation of a national action plan for implementing United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on women and peace and security and, in 2024, the legalization of same-sex marriage. Future action would be guided by the new National Action Plan on Gender Equality for the period 2026–2030, along with civil society input. Equality in law had been largely achieved and no effort would be spared to ensure equality in practice as well.
5. To uphold the rights of the child, action had been taken to strengthen foster care and adoption provisions, prevent child abuse and enhance services and benefits in general. Bullying in schools had been addressed under a new 2023 law, and mobile telephones had been banned in school settings in an attempt to reverse the increase in cyberbullying. Blended learning classrooms had been introduced for children in remote areas.
6. Active implementation of the National Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma 2021–2030 continued, and all available European funding was being used to enhance access to employment, education, healthcare and housing for the Roma community. The country's first National Action Plan against Racism and Intolerance had been adopted in 2020, and the newly created Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family was currently working on a second plan. For persons with disabilities, a national accessibility authority had been established and a national strategy for the period 2024–2030, with a focus on deinstitutionalization and independent living, was under development.
7. Greek refugee reception and asylum services were among the most efficient in Europe, and capacity and infrastructure were constantly being improved. Procedural safeguards were in place to address trafficking and protect victims and, since 2021, the National Emergency Response Mechanism had supported thousands of unaccompanied minors. More recently, the General Secretariat for Vulnerable People and Institutional Protection and a national guardianship system had been established to enhance support for the most vulnerable, particularly at the reception stage. A three-tiered system was in place to deal with any allegations of mistreatment at the border, and the Greek Ombudsman and the National Transparency Authority were empowered to conduct independent investigations. Additionally, in 2022, the Special Committee for Compliance with Fundamental Rights and

the new post of Fundamental Rights Officer had been established in the Ministry of Migration and Asylum.

8. The Hellenic Police had introduced reforms to protect the rights of women, minors, foreign detainees, domestic violence victims and migrants, regardless of their migration status or ethnic origin. Reforms were also under way in the justice sector, where the aim was to reorganize courts geographically, streamline procedures and speed up case resolution. Lastly, the Government had been working to develop a resilient and pluralistic media ecosystem, with a focus on protecting and empowering journalists, enhancing transparency and pluralism, guaranteeing financial sustainability and job stability, and promoting media literacy.

9. **Ms. Kpatcha Tchamdjia** said that she would like to know what channels were used to provide training and raise awareness about human rights and the Covenant among judges, lawyers and law enforcement officers; how many officials had benefited from such training; and in how many cases provisions of the Covenant had been invoked by national courts. She would welcome information about the action taken to give effect to the Views adopted by the Committee in the various cases involving Greece submitted under the individual communications procedure, as well as the delegation's comments on reports that the Committee's Views and the rulings of the European Court of Justice were no longer published in Greek on any official State web page and that the State party's general approach to protecting human rights was insufficiently proactive.

10. In view of the reportedly far-reaching implications of COVID-related restrictions for the human rights of asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants, she would like to know whether asylum procedures had been suspended because of those restrictive measures and, if so, for how long. The delegation's comments on allegations that the Greek authorities had used the pandemic as grounds to expand the use of closed migrant centres and reinforce their strict border policies would be appreciated. Additionally, she would like to receive statistics on the number of investigations opened, prosecutions brought and convictions handed down against perpetrators of domestic violence and femicide committed during the COVID-19 lockdown and details of the measures taken to ensure effective reparation for the victims.

11. Although progress had been made in the reporting and prosecution of racist crimes, it appeared that perpetrators still sometimes escaped punishment and that victims did not always report incidents owing to fear, persistent trauma and a lack of trust in the authorities. She would like to know what was being done to encourage victims of discrimination, racism and hate crimes to come forward and ensure that they had access to psychological, social, medical and other support services. She would also like details of the training that personnel involved in the provision of victim support and protection services received. Lastly, could the delegation explain why the transfer of the National Council against Racism and Intolerance from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of Social Policy and the Family appeared to have resulted in a slowdown in its activities?

12. **Mr. Helfer** said that, since recent reforms intended to reduce corruption were reported to be having only a limited practical impact, it would be useful to have statistics on the number of investigations conducted, prosecutions brought and convictions obtained in corruption cases. Details of the measures in place to ensure thorough and impartial investigations into all allegations of corruption would be appreciated, as well as the delegation's comments on reports of a lack of independence on the part of the National Transparency Authority and other anti-corruption bodies. He would also like more details about capacity-building initiatives organized under the National Anti-Corruption Action Plan 2022–2025, including the number and types of training sessions organized for auditors, investigators and prosecutors; the implementation of whistle-blower protection mechanisms; the adequacy of the financial, human and technical resources provided to anti-corruption bodies; and civil society engagement in anti-corruption programmes.

13. He would like clarification as to whether the 2003 law concerning the use of firearms met the international law requirement for their use to be limited to situations involving an imminent threat of serious injury or proximate and grave threat to life. He would also like to know whether that law's provisions applied to maritime surveillance operations and, if not, what rules did apply and whether they were in accordance with the Covenant and

United Nations guidance on the use of force and firearms. He would welcome information about the training that police officers received, as well as the delegation's comments on reports of excessive force being used, including the use of live ammunition, during pushback operations. He was concerned that allegations of such excessive use of force were apparently not being investigated in a timely, effective and impartial manner; for example, incidents of police violence against Roma communities and violent pushbacks at the Evros border had apparently still not been investigated years after the events. He wondered how the State party ensured that the Ombudsman's Office could effectively exercise its authority to investigate such allegations in practice.

14. He would like to hear about the steps being taken to implement and enforce the National Action Plan for Mental Health and the law providing for the reform of the psychiatric care system to reduce overcrowding and improve the overall quality of care. Assurances that the procedures for involuntary commitment to psychiatric care were not marked by lengthy delays, a lack of legal counsel or a lack of independence and impartiality on the part of medical professionals would be helpful, as would an explanation as to how the application of appropriate legal safeguards was ensured and details of any action being taken to reduce the number of involuntary commitments. Lastly, he would like to know what was being done to ensure that the use of physical and chemical restraints was properly regulated and minimized and what the current status was of the community psychosocial programmes intended to ensure more humane conditions in psychiatric institutions.

15. **Ms. Donders** said that she would be interested to learn how the State party ensured that the short-term detention of unaccompanied minors and the imposition of significant restrictions on their movement in closed, controlled-access centres did not amount to disproportionate limitations of their rights to freedom of movement, liberty and security. The delegation might comment on how the State party intended to secure sufficient resources to support the effectiveness of the National Guardianship System for Unaccompanied Minors and the Ippokratis I Project, which provided medical and psychosocial services to residents in the accommodation facilities of the Reception and Identification Service. It would be useful to know how guardians would be appointed and their services provided in practice and to hear about measures in place to monitor those initiatives on a continuous basis. She would be grateful to learn how the State party ensured that the age determination procedure was a multidisciplinary process, harmonized throughout Greece and used only in cases of serious doubt about claimed age.

16. She would welcome an explanation as to why it was not possible to restrict contact between perpetrators of domestic violence or sexual offences and their children before such persons were convicted by a court of first instance, even when their fitness to exercise parental responsibility had been called into doubt by doctors or social workers. The State party might comment on whether it supported the introduction of individualized risk assessments when determining custody and visitation rights. It would be useful to learn how women and children who were forced into contact with alleged abusers under shared custody arrangements were protected and to receive more information about the option for prosecutors to restrict such contact in cases of imminent danger to a child's mental or physical health.

17. She would be interested to know why the State party had expressed a disinclination to make femicide a stand-alone crime and what steps it had taken to protect women against femicide and domestic violence, including by establishing early warning systems and increasing the availability of counselling centres and shelters throughout Greece. It would be useful to learn what had been done to help women to safely report domestic violence and to build trust in the system. More information about the criminal mediation procedure that served as an alternative form of dispute resolution in domestic violence cases would also be helpful. The delegation might comment on whether the State party had a comprehensive strategy to prevent and raise awareness about gender-based violence and whether there were mandatory, ongoing capacity-building activities for law enforcement officials in that regard. What steps had the State party taken to protect migrant women from physical and sexual assault by members of the Greek Coast Guard both on land and during pushbacks at sea – in which pregnant women had also reportedly been attacked – and to prosecute and punish the perpetrators?

18. **Mr. Yigezu** said that he wished to hear what steps were planned to improve the extremely poor living conditions and to prevent overcrowding at migrant reception and detention centres. It would be helpful to learn what the State party was doing to avert shortages of basic necessities such as food, drinking water and medications for migrants during surges in arrivals at those centres and how the State party ensured that infrastructure at Reception and Identification Centres was regularly maintained. He would welcome information on the steps planned to ensure that third-country nationals and asylum-seekers subject to asylum and return procedures were detained only as a last resort following a proper individualized assessment, for reasons expressly provided for by law and for the shortest period possible, in line with international human rights standards. He would appreciate clarification as to any plans for the introduction of a procedure for conducting individualized risk assessments before the imposition of a detention order and for the consideration of alternative measures so as to afford legal safety and reduce the risk of arbitrary detention of such persons. The State party might comment on whether it would consider abolishing administrative detention of asylum-seekers on grounds of illegal entry, especially in respect of members of vulnerable groups such as families with children and unaccompanied minors. He would be grateful to receive statistics, if available, on the use of alternative measures to detention of migrants and asylum-seekers during the reporting period.

19. He wondered how the State party ensured that all persons deprived of their liberty – regardless of their nationality or status – enjoyed fundamental legal safeguards against ill-treatment from the beginning of their detention, including immediate access to a lawyer and to an independent and effective complaints procedure, and that foreign nationals received notification of custody, access to a doctor and the right to free legal aid when needed.

20. **Mr. Soh** said that he would welcome information on the steps being taken to develop a comprehensive statistical system on trafficking in persons, to improve early identification and referral systems and to build the capacity of law enforcement officials and first responders in those areas. It would be useful to receive disaggregated data on the number of cases of trafficking in persons investigated, the number of convictions secured and the number of sentences imposed. The State party might comment on the steps that it was taking to adopt and fund the implementation of a new national action plan for combating human trafficking. It would be useful to know what was being done to increase the capacity of shelters for victims of that offence; to ensure that all such persons had access to such shelters; and to ensure the quality of services in shelters, as well as what long-term reintegration programmes were available and how victims were being supported in seeking compensation.

21. He would be interested to learn what steps were being taken to streamline the legal aid application process and the court fee waivers system for vulnerable persons; to increase the capacity and resources of the legal aid system to ensure timely and effective representation; and to address delays in the provision of legal aid, especially during police investigations and initial periods of detention. How did the State party intend to resolve ongoing delays in compensating legal aid lawyers and what steps were being taken to implement quality control and monitoring mechanisms to improve the effectiveness of the legal aid system?

The meeting was suspended at 4.05 p.m. and resumed at 4.35 p.m.

22. **A representative of Greece** said that direct reference was made to the articles of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in a large number of decisions both of the higher courts and of courts of first instance in Greece. The relevant articles of the Covenant were listed in such decisions together with those of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights). Pursuant to article 28 of the Constitution, international conventions formed an integral part of national law once they had been ratified, and they prevailed over other provisions in the event of a conflict. No court was permitted to apply a law that was deemed to contradict a human rights treaty or other international convention that Greece had ratified.

23. The National School of Judges provided initial and in-service training to judges and prosecutors. Initial training had been mandatory since 2022 and covered topics such as human rights, family law, gender-based and domestic violence, and the treatment of victims. In 2023,

13 training seminars had been held online and in person for judges, and 3 had been held for court staff, while in 2024, 15 such seminars were to be held for judges and 12 for court staff.

24. **A representative of Greece** said that his country did not have specific legislation providing for the receipt of Views from the Committee and that there was no specific legal basis for the provision of compensation in national law, the Covenant or the European Convention on Human Rights. Complainants could seek damages for acts or omissions by the State before the administrative courts, however, or could seek an extrajudicial settlement from the Legal Council of State. The courts had not dealt with such cases before because claimants had not previously sought to use such avenues of redress.

25. Information on the implementation of Views was transmitted to the Committee as and when it was requested, while the Views themselves were translated and transmitted to the relevant ministry. Although the translations of Views were not published on the Internet, and the Government could do more to communicate them to the public, the findings of the Committee were disseminated by the Greek National Commission for Human Rights and other non-governmental organizations. The Government cooperated fully with the Committee in its handling of individual communications and complied with requests from the Committee to take interim measures.

26. **A representative of Greece** said that all of the measures taken by the Greek authorities during the COVID-19 pandemic had been necessary and proportionate to the scientifically evaluated risks, had had a specific focus and duration, and had been applied in a non-discriminatory manner in conformity with the Constitution and international treaties. Restrictive measures had been applied in accordance with Greek law, and all measures had been subject to re-evaluation on an ongoing basis. The public health measures that had been introduced had not violated the right to health or to the free development of personality and human dignity.

27. A number of amendments related to corruption had been made to the Criminal Code pursuant to Law No. 5090/2024 of 2024. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development had acknowledged that Greece had made significant progress in tackling the problem of bribery of government officials by foreign entities. There were a number of ongoing investigations and pending cases dealing with such offences, and judgments in some of those cases were expected in the near future.

28. There had been widespread concern and public debate regarding the impact of amendments to the Civil Code made pursuant to Law No. 4800/2021 on custody and visitation rights in situations involving domestic violence. Parental rights could not be suspended or limited as an ancillary sanction to a criminal conviction. The Greek legal system offered means of regulating the exercise of parental rights by persons who had been abusive in respect of their spouses or children. The Civil Code provided that the ability of each parent to safeguard the right of the other parent to enjoy a relationship with the child must be included as a criterion in the assessment of the child's best interest. It also provided that disruption of the child's emotional relationship with the other parent constituted grounds for the withdrawal of parental rights.

29. It was unnecessary to make femicide a stand-alone crime because all aspects of murder were already covered by Greek law.

30. **A representative of Greece** said that funding had been secured to enhance the capabilities of the National Council against Racism and Intolerance, whose responsibilities included overseeing the implementation of relevant laws to ensure compliance with European and international standards, promoting and coordinating the activities of entities that worked to address racism and intolerance and increasing cooperation with civil society organizations. Over the next two years, the Council would aim to support as many as 10,000 victims through a multilingual platform that would provide them with access to information and services. It would also work to build the skills of the public officials tasked with drafting the second national action plan against racism and intolerance. In addition, it planned to run a national awareness-raising campaign aimed at reaching 100,000 people.

31. **A representative of Greece** said that violence against women had increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic; in April 2020, there had been a rise of

227 per cent in the number of calls made to the SOS 15900 helpline to report such incidents. During the pandemic, staff from the network of organizations working to prevent and address violence against women had remained available to assist women in need and had been authorized to manage cases remotely. Psychosocial and other forms of support had been provided through telephone or online sessions or in person, while taking all appropriate measures to prevent transmission of the virus. An updated referral procedure had ensured that women and children would continue to have access to shelters. Awareness of gender-based violence had been raised through a television and social media campaign.

32. The National Action Plan on Gender Equality contained a specific component on gender-based violence, and a comprehensive strategy setting out protection measures and measures to facilitate the reporting of cases had been in place since 2010. The Government had secured funding for the network of organizations dealing with all forms of violence against women, whose services were accessible for persons with disabilities and others throughout the country, including victims of trafficking. The Government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had run national and local campaigns aimed at challenging social stereotypes, encouraging women to speak openly about violence and promoting gender equality using television and radio advertisements, workshops, training sessions and the distribution of information materials. In 2024, a new campaign aimed at tackling gender-based violence and harassment had been launched by the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family Affairs in conjunction with the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation and Athens Urban Rail Transport. The Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family Affairs prepared an annual report on gender-based violence with a view to raising awareness of the problem and the steps taken to address it.

33. A mobile “panic button” application had been developed to enable women facing an imminent threat of domestic violence to receive immediate help from the police. The Public Employment Service had taken steps to facilitate the participation of unemployed women victims of domestic violence in entrepreneurship and employment programmes. Women who had completed the employment support sessions run by the network were eligible to participate in the Service’s programme for vulnerable social groups, as were LGBTQ individuals and victims of trafficking. The National Centre for Social Solidarity ran two support centres and two shelters for victims of domestic violence and trafficking.

34. In late 2022, the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family Affairs had worked with the National Referral Mechanism for Victims of Trafficking to run two-day training sessions for counsellors supporting women victims of gender-based violence. The training had covered areas such as the handling of victims’ applications for protection and the establishment and operation of a system for registering those applications and monitoring cases.

35. **A representative of Greece** said that the Government was implementing an extensive deinstitutionalization programme. Twenty persons with disabilities had been relocated from the branch of the Social Welfare Centre of Western Greece in Lechaina, where the use of physical and chemical restraints had been reported, to supported living arrangements. Four more of the Centre’s residents were due to move to such homes shortly. The persons concerned had seen a significant improvement in their lives since their relocation. Efforts had been made to ensure that the persons who remained in the Centre received better care, and the ratio of staff to patients had been improved. Overall, more than 700 persons with disabilities had been moved to supported living arrangements, and the number of such facilities had been increased to 134 nationwide. Since 2021, 1,100 persons with disabilities had been provided with personal assistants to help them live more independently.

36. Social welfare institutions were required to designate a protection officer tasked with identifying and reporting any cases of abuse. Such cases were then referred to the relevant regional authorities and, where necessary, the public prosecutor. The National Transparency Authority was an independent mechanism that conducted inspections in any institutions in which abuse had been reported or was suspected.

37. **A representative of Greece** said that, during the pandemic, the Hellenic Police had taken all steps necessary to ensure that they were able to continue handling cases of domestic violence while complying with COVID-19 restrictions. The number of domestic violence victims had increased from around 5,200 in 2019 to almost 11,600 in 2023. Ten women had

been killed by their male partner so far in 2024. Each regional unit of the Hellenic Police had its own office to address domestic violence, a designated safe place for victims and an officer responsible for handling all pretrial procedures. A total of 3,540 women had been given access to the “panic button” application, whose scope had recently been extended to cover domestic violence victims of all genders. Five offices for the protection of minors and a dedicated hotline had been set up.

38. Prosecutors and investigating officers handling cases of domestic violence were required to determine whether the criminal mediation procedure provided for in Law No. 3500/2006 was a feasible option in each case. Perpetrators who complied with the conditions established under that procedure would have the criminal charges against them dropped after three years.

39. Guidelines had been issued to ensure compliance by law enforcement services with the prohibition of any form of violence against persons in pretrial detention and the timely conduct of administrative and criminal proceedings. Individuals were informed of the reasons for their detention and their rights immediately upon being taken into police custody and were entitled to legal assistance at each stage of the proceedings. Law enforcement services placed priority on ensuring detainees’ health and safety. Efforts were made to ensure that detention was used only as a last resort and to apply alternative measures where possible. Individuals who benefited from such alternatives were usually required to report to the authorities on a regular basis or remain in a specific location.

40. The guidelines for law enforcement services also stressed their obligation to assist foreign detainees in communicating with their relatives, lawyers, consular authorities and relevant international bodies. Foreign detainees without a sufficient mastery of Greek were entitled to the services of an interpreter, and information leaflets were translated into their preferred language. Such individuals had the right to appeal decisions pertaining to their detention through a number of channels, details of which had been provided in paragraph 125 of the report (CCPR/C/GRC/3).

41. Greek legislation on international protection was fully consistent with that of the European Union, which had provided funding to the Greek Government for 2021–2027 to cover the operational costs of pre-departure centres for returning migrants and to cover the cost of legal assistance for foreign detainees, interpretation services and legal experts’ fees.

42. **A representative of Greece** said that the Hellenic Police had established two departments and 68 offices to combat racially motivated violence and hate crimes, provide holistic support to victims and prevent secondary victimization. Victims could report hate crimes through a hotline and a contact form on the police website. Statistics on hate crimes were regularly transmitted to the Ministry of Justice so that it could update the relevant databases. The cybercrime division ran activities to raise awareness about online hate speech and racist violence. Officers received training on the effective investigation of racially motivated offences and those committed against persons with disabilities and members of the LGBTQI+ and Roma communities and on the sensitive and respectful treatment of victims. Training programmes on hate crime and speech had been designed, funded and organized by the Hellenic Police, NGOs, the Government, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training and the Council of Europe.

43. The Hellenic Police had a strict hierarchical structure and followed military rules of discipline. Officers were trained in using weapons and carried those that were appropriate for their assigned duties. The use of force by the police was governed by article 2 of the Code of Police Ethics; officers were made aware of that code during their initial training and participated in additional in-service courses aimed at developing their capacity to protect human rights, handle racist and xenophobic incidents and apply rules of conduct in practice.

44. **A representative of Greece** said that the Hellenic Coast Guard had rescued hundreds of thousands of migrants and continued to do so, receiving international recognition for its efforts. Its officers acted in accordance with international maritime safety standards and prioritized the provision of assistance to individuals in potential distress, taking into account the risks involved. The use of force and weapons during law enforcement and border control operations was governed by clear legal rules. Officers were required to abide by the principle of proportionality, and any use of firearms had to be reported to the competent public

prosecutor. Detailed guidelines had been disseminated to officers to assist them in dealing with vulnerable individuals and securing appropriate medical care for them. Juvenile court prosecutors were immediately informed of the arrival of minors by the relevant port authority.

45. **A representative of Greece** said that the Hellenic Police had established various teams and regional departments to combat trafficking in persons. The officers assigned to those units received specialized training. The departments were responsible for dealing with crimes against sexual freedom and sexual exploitation for financial gain, facilitating cooperation with social and protection services and aiding victims. The Hellenic Police participated in the joint action days against trafficking in human beings organized under the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats.

46. **A representative of Greece** said that the fight against trafficking remained a top priority for her Government, which had participated in efforts to harmonize practices at the European Union and international levels and establish strategic alliances with NGOs and international organizations. The Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings had been established under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2013. Its responsibilities included preparing and implementing the national strategy to combat that crime and cooperating closely with national authorities, the European Union Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, international organizations and civil society. It was also mandated to oversee the work of the National Referral Mechanism, which was responsible for protecting and assisting child victims of trafficking and organized regular capacity-building activities for stakeholders. The Office was working with State and non-State actors to update the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking in order to ensure the protection of all victims, address the financial aspects of trafficking and facilitate the implementation of preventive measures in response to humanitarian crises. A seminar on strengthening that action plan had been organized in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

47. **A representative of Greece** said that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, protective equipment, including masks, gloves and antiseptic products, had been distributed to the residents of facilities for migrants, and common areas had been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected daily. Under a national crisis management plan for refugees, specific areas had been designated for medical care, including an examination room, treatment centre and an isolation ward, and an entire facility could be placed under a time-limited quarantine if needed. A temporary restriction had been placed on the movement of third-country nationals residing at the centres, and only international and civil society organizations named on a predefined list had had access to the centres. Those measures did not constitute a derogation from the rights and freedoms established under the Covenant, as residents had been allowed to travel to the nearest urban centres on a daily basis. The movement restrictions imposed on the general population had not applied to asylum-seekers covered by the Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection (HELIOS) and Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation (ESTIA) programmes. A temporary social security number had been assigned to migrants in an irregular situation to ensure that vaccinations were administered free of charge to all, regardless of their legal status. Asylum application procedures had not been suspended, and digital services, including a remote asylum interview, had been introduced to facilitate safe access to those procedures.

48. One of the main priorities of the migration and asylum policy had been to provide safe and decent housing, food, financial aid, emergency healthcare and psychosocial support to asylum-seekers. Upon arrival in Greece, all third-country nationals received a welcome kit containing a blanket, pillows and personal hygiene products. Funding for non-food items was secured through donations from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Asylum applicants at all reception centres were provided with clothing and received free transportation to the local market and healthcare centres on a regular basis. Many reception facilities had an entry verification system and security teams comprising staff from the Hellenic Police to ensure the safety and privacy of residents. Where necessary, migrants and asylum-seekers were transferred from the islands to mainland facilities to ease overcrowding. Greece took all possible measures to ensure appropriate living conditions for all residents, and technical improvements and repair work were regularly carried out at reception centres. Doctors, nurses, psychologists, social workers and midwives provided

medical care and psychosocial support at reception centres under the Hippocrates Programme.

49. Contingency plans were in place to enable the immigration system to cope with spikes in the number of arrivals. The relevant authorities could restrict the movement of newly arrived third-country nationals until the completion of identification and registration procedures, which had to be completed within five days. As part of those procedures, fingerprints were taken and checks were conducted to search for evidence of prior criminal behaviour.

50. **A representative of Greece** said that the competencies of the Special Secretariat for the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors had been transferred to the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection, which had been established by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum in June 2023. Under the guardianship system that had come into effect on 1 January 2024, the aim was to guarantee that every unaccompanied minor was assigned a guardian. To monitor the system, a complaints mechanism had been set up, a mobile application and a questionnaire had been distributed among the minors as a means of obtaining feedback and a national register of unaccompanied minors had been created. There were currently 137 guardians and more than 1,500 unaccompanied minors in the guardianship programme, which was financed out of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund for the period 2021–2027.

51. Age assessments were conducted following a procedure based on international standards that respected children's rights, and the assessments would be updated to conform to European standards under the new pact on migration and asylum. The rules in force at reception centres also applied to unaccompanied minors. After registration, they were permitted to move outside the facilities provided that their guardians were informed. Interpretation services were available.

52. **A representative of Greece** said that prisoners were afforded adequate and effective protection under the Penitentiary Code. Prisoners were permitted to submit written petitions to the prison authorities and appeal against those authorities' decisions in court. Under the Code of Criminal Procedure, prisoners had the right to contact the prosecutor overseeing the enforcement of their sentence, who conducted weekly prison visits. A legal remedy had been introduced for persons in pretrial detention and convicted prisoners to allow them to bring cases regarding their detention conditions to court, in accordance with the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and recommendations from the Council of Europe. Between the time of the establishment of the remedy and September 2024, 226 appeals had been lodged and 115 decisions had been rendered. Fifteen of those decisions had found in favour of the appellant, and the ensuing actions had included compensation, a sentence reduction or transfer to a different prison. A working group had been established to develop a short, accessible guide to inform prisoners of their rights, obligations and the legal remedies available. The Ministry of Citizen Protection had signed a contract with the Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund to relocate prisoners held at the Korydallos Penitentiary Complex, the country's largest prison, to facilities that complied with European and international standards in areas such as accessibility for persons with disabilities, security and risk prevention.

53. **A representative of Greece** said that the Government had established vaccination teams, and those teams had built a relationship of trust with refugees in order to encourage them to return to a clinic for the second dose, thus improving the coverage rate. An agency had been established in 2020 to improve the quality of healthcare services and ensure patient safety. The Ministry of Health was developing, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), a national strategy entitled "HQC-2-Greece", which would include a section on mental health. A reporting system and employee training programme on quality of care and patient safety would be established under the strategy. Under a new mental health law that would take effect on 1 January 2025, a new information system would be established, patients would be treated at a hospital close to their place of residence and involuntary hospitalization would be reduced. A task force had been set up to modernize the legal framework concerning involuntary hospitalization, and a training programme had been introduced for mental health service professionals on the use of mechanical restraints in line

with protocols that had been developed in collaboration with the committee established for the protection of the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities.

54. **Ms. Donders** said that she wondered how the State party ensured that sufficient human and financial resources were available for the guardianship programme for unaccompanied minors and whether the complaint forms and questionnaires were available in languages other than Greek.

55. With regard to child custody cases, she would like to know why restriction of contact between a child and a parent who engaged in domestic violence was not possible as soon as doctors or social workers called such a person's fitness to exercise parental responsibility into doubt, rather than waiting until the person was convicted. She also wished to know whether the Government had considered establishing femicide as a separate offence as a way of raising awareness of that problem and promoting preventive measures, since the incidence of that crime was driven by wider societal problems such as gender stereotyping and discrimination. She would be interested to learn how women were made aware of the panic button application, whether it could be used outside of urban areas, whether perpetrators of domestic violence were able to view the application and whether the police and support staff had sufficient capacity to respond to all alerts.

56. **Mr. Yigezu** said that he wished to know whether conditions were adequate at all new places of detention and whether individual assessments were carried out and alternatives to detention were considered when deciding whether to detain migrants in an irregular situation. He would appreciate statistics on the number of migrants who had been offered such alternatives, and he would be grateful to hear the delegation's views concerning reports of poor conditions at places of detention for migrants and asylum-seekers who were to be deported. He wondered what the outcomes had been of the investigations undertaken by the National Transparency Authority into the excessive use of force against migrants.

57. **Mr. Helfer** said that he wished to learn more about the successes thus far of the National Anti-Corruption Action Plan for 2022–2025 and the challenges that had been encountered, particularly those related to ensuring the availability of sufficient resources to investigate corruption allegations in a timely and independent manner.

58. **Ms. Kpatcha Tchamdjia** said that she would be grateful for information regarding the sentences that had been handed down in domestic violence cases during the COVID-19 pandemic and the financial compensation paid to victims.

59. **Mr. Soh** said that he would appreciate further details regarding the quality of services provided at shelters, the long-term reintegration programmes and measures to facilitate access to compensation and ensure legal assistance for victims of trafficking in persons.

60. **A representative of Greece** said that the Hippocrates Programme was funded by the European Union and had a budget of €15 million. Every day, more doctors were arriving on the country's islands to assist migrants at the reception centres. The questionnaires for unaccompanied child migrants were provided in languages that the children could understand.

61. **A representative of Greece** said that, in cases where the number of medical staff on hand at reception centres was insufficient, patients were referred to local public hospitals for treatment. Reception centres did not systematically detain migrants and, in most cases, the registration procedure lasted one or two days. Two reception centres had been established on the Greek mainland to ease overcrowding at centres on the islands.

62. **A representative of Greece** said that free legal aid was available to human trafficking victims, and a number of NGOs provided legal representation. There were shelters for women victims of violence and sexual exploitation, some of which were run by NGOs, and there was one shelter for victims of human trafficking. Accommodation was guaranteed for child victims. Compensation could be claimed from the Greek Compensation Authority and, pursuant to a 2019 amendment to Law No. 4478/2017, any assets seized during the criminal proceedings were to be immediately returned to the victim.

63. **A representative of Greece** said that the highest tier of the applicable sentencing range was imposed for the crime of femicide, and vigorous campaigns had been conducted

over recent years to raise awareness of the issue. As Greece faced severe resource constraints, any additional allocations to support unaccompanied minors had to be taken from elsewhere in the justice system's budget, which risked slowing down other judicial proceedings.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.