



HAUT-COMMISSARIAT AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME • OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

PALAIS DES NATIONS • 1211 GENEVA 10, SWITZERLAND

www.ohchr.org • TEL: +41 22 917 9000 • FAX: +41 22 917 9008 • E-MAIL: registry@ohchr.org

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Excellency,

I have been following the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Greece and welcome the constructive engagement of the Government of Greece during the 39th session of the UPR Working Group in November 2021.

As the final outcome report on the review of Greece was recently adopted by the Human Rights Council at its 49th session, I would like to take this opportunity to follow up on a number of areas raised in the two reports that my Office had prepared for the review of Greece – the Compilation of United Nations information and the Summary of Stakeholders' submissions – which I consider in need of particular attention over the next four and a half years, until the next cycle of the UPR. In identifying those areas, I have considered the statements and recommendations made by 97 delegations and the presentation made and responses provided by the delegation of Greece. I have also considered the actions taken by the Government of Greece to implement the 173 recommendations fully supported as well as those that were partially supported during the second cycle of the UPR. The aforementioned areas cover a range of issues, which appear in the annex to this letter.

I welcome the adoption of the first national plan on the rights of persons with disabilities, the first national plan against racism and intolerance, and the first national action plan on the rights of the child, and I encourage the government to ensure their effective implementation. I also welcome the adoption of the Law N° 4604/2019 on promoting substantive gender equality and preventing and combating gender-based violence and the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, and I encourage the government to ensure their effective implementation and to finalize the adoption of the national plan on gender equality. I also welcome the strengthening of the legislative framework of the Greek National Commission for Human Rights.

I also encourage Greece to develop a comprehensive national human rights action plan in order to achieve concrete results in the areas highlighted in the annex to this letter and to facilitate preparations for the fourth cycle of the UPR. My advice to all Member States is to develop and implement national action plans in close consultation and cooperation with all stakeholders, in particular the national human rights institution and all civil society organizations and, where necessary, with the support of international organizations, including my Office and other United Nations entities.

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H.E. Mr. Nikos DENDIAS
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Greece



I further encourage Greece to establish a national mechanism for comprehensive reporting and follow-up to recommendations received from all international and regional human rights mechanisms and to treaty obligations, linking them to the Sustainable Development Goals. To this end, I strongly recommend the use of the OHCHR practical guide on this topic, which is available at:

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/HR_PUB_16_1_NMRF_PracticalGuide.pdf

Please note that I am sharing my advice with all Member States as they go through the third cycle of the UPR with a view to assisting States with the implementation of the recommendations, following the review. One important measure that can positively contribute to follow-up action is voluntary mid-term reporting. Therefore, I strongly encourage all Member States to submit a voluntary mid-term report two years after the adoption of the UPR outcome report. In this regard, I welcome the practice of Greece of submitting mid-term reports in the previous cycles and encourage the Government of Greece to continue with this practice and to submit a mid-term report on follow-up to the third cycle of the review by 2024.

As stated by the Secretary-General in his 2017 report on the work of the Organization (A/72/1, paragraph 98): *“The Human Rights Council’s universal periodic review process is now entering a new cycle, with every Member State scheduled for a third round of scrutiny. We will work to strengthen the relevance, precision and impact of the Council’s recommendations, including by providing better support to Member States in implementation, stronger collaboration with United Nations country teams and the establishment of national mechanisms for human rights reporting and follow-up to link the universal periodic review to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.”*

I look forward to discussing with you ways in which my Office may assist Greece in relation to the areas identified in this letter and its annex.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Michelle Bachelet
High Commissioner for Human Rights

cc: H. E. Mr. Panos ALEXANDRIS
Secretary General of Justice and Human Rights of the Ministry of Justice
Greece

Ms. Camilla BRUCKNER
Director of the United Nations Office in Brussels
Representative of the United Nations System before the EU
Belgium

Ms. Birgit VAN HOUT
Regional Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OHCHR Regional Office for Europe
Belgium

Annex

Scope of international obligations and cooperation with international human rights mechanisms and bodies

- Ratifying the human rights instruments to which Greece is not yet a party, including the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, and the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960).

Implementation of international human rights obligations, taking into account applicable international humanitarian law

A. Cross-cutting issues

Equality and non-discrimination

- Enhancing policies and programmes to prevent, combat and punish all forms of discrimination, racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and hate speech, with special focus on migrants, refugees, people of African descent and Roma, including by adopting further awareness-raising campaigns, training law enforcement personnel and judges and implementing the National Plan against Racism and Intolerance (2020-2023).
- Adopting further measures to ensure respect for the right to equality and non-discrimination of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, and investigating and punishing hate crimes against them.

Development, the environment, and business and human rights

- Adopting a national plan for business and human rights in line with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

B. Civil and political rights

Right to life, liberty and security of person

- Enhancing measures to prevent the excessive use of force and all forms of violence by law enforcement officials, and investigating and prosecuting all cases of violence and abuse.
- Taking further measures to ensure that the conditions of prisons and other detention centres are in line with the United Nations Standards Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, including by addressing prison overcrowding and improving sanitary conditions.

Administration of justice, including impunity, and the rule of law

- Strengthening the judicial system to improve effective access to justice and assistance services for victims of racist violence, for victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and for persons with disabilities.

Fundamental freedoms and the right to participate in public and political life

- Ensuring a safe environment for journalists and human rights defenders and non-governmental organizations, including those working with migrants and with victims of human trafficking, ensuring that their work is not criminalized or penalized, and investigating all acts of intimidation and violence against them.
- Promoting greater participation of women in political life, political decision-making process and in leadership positions.

Prohibition of all forms of slavery

- Adopting further measures to prevent, combat and punish trafficking in persons, including by ensuring that perpetrators are punished appropriately, strengthening the legal and social protection for victims, training judges, lawyers, law enforcement officers and the new national referral mechanism, and by implementing the National Plan to Combat on Human Trafficking in Persons jointly with the Minister of Citizen Protections' Strategy against Trafficking in Human Beings 2021-2025.

C. Economic, social and cultural rights

Right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work

- Adopting further measures to bridge the wage gap between men and women and enhancing further efforts to address unemployment and precarious working conditions affecting disproportionately certain groups like women, persons with disabilities and minorities.

Right to health

- Strengthening efforts aimed at providing inclusive, qualitative and accessible healthcare services, particularly for persons with disabilities.

Right to education

- Enhancing measures to ensure full and equal access to inclusive and quality primary, secondary and higher education for all, in particular for children with disabilities, Roma children and children of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers.

D. Rights of specific persons or groups

Women

- Continuing efforts to prevent and combat gender discrimination and stereotypes, promote gender equality and eradicate all forms of violence against women, including by ensuring the adoption and the implementation of the National Action Plan on Gender Equality, and fully implementing the Law 4604/2019 and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

Children

- Stepping up efforts to combat child poverty and ensure their rights of education and health, including migrant children, and implementing the first national action plan on the rights of the child aimed at combating child poverty.

Persons with disabilities

- Ensuring that the national legal and policy frameworks are fully in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with a view to prohibit all forms of discrimination against them and implementing the first national plan on the rights of persons with disabilities with the full participation of the National Confederation of Persons with Disabilities.
- Adopting additional measures to integrate persons with disabilities in society, including those focused on education, health care, labour market and access to justice.

Minorities

- Enhancing efforts to further integrate minority groups, particularly Roma, by increasing their access to education, health, housing, employment and their participation in social, economic and public life, and fully implementing the new National Strategy and Action Plan for Roma Social Inclusion.

Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers

- Enhancing legislative, independent monitoring and policy measures to protect the human rights of asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants and to prevent and combat discrimination against them, including by conducting additional awareness raising campaigns.
- Reviewing individually every asylum request and investigating reports of breaches of the principle of non-refoulement, as well as the allegations and possible cases of summary force returns -so-called pushbacks- of asylum-seekers and migrants.
- Adopting further measures to improve the conditions in the reception and identification centres, and to achieve greater integration of asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants, including through the integrated child protection system for unaccompanied minors.
- Continuing efforts to effectively include all refugees and migrants in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.