



Statement by
the Republic of Slovenia
at the
36th Session of the UPR Working Group – Review of Bulgaria

Geneva, 6 November 2020

Madame President,

Slovenia wishes to commend the delegation of Bulgaria for the national report, its presentation today and the commitment to the UPR process.

Slovenia would like to make the following recommendations:

- to 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.
- to amend national legislation to include a definition of hate speech in line with the Convention, to investigate racially motivated violent acts and crimes, to prosecute and punish perpetrators and to raise public awareness on respect for diversity.

We welcome Bulgaria's participation in an international OSCE Project Effective Criminal Justice Strategies and Practices to Combat Gender-based Domestic Violence in Eastern Europe with the main objective of encouraging victims to report acts of violence, strengthening the efficiency of law-enforcement and judicial bodies, medical personnel and social workers.

The judgment of the Bulgarian Constitutional Court – in which the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) was declared incompatible with the Constitution – had engendered a campaign against the Istanbul Convention and an anti-gender movement. This campaign had resulted in the intimidation of activists and women's rights organizations, reported cuts in State funding for related services and increased attacks on the LGBTI community.

Slovenia is concerned about the increased incidents of hate speech and hate crime, specifically targeting minority groups such as Turks, Roma, Muslims, Jews, people of African descent, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and members of sexual minorities. We are also concerned about numerous reports of attacks, threats and harassment of journalists, which went unpunished, and of political pressure on the media to secure favourable media coverage and suppress criticism, including of corruption. Slovenia encourages Bulgaria to intensify efforts to address prejudice, intolerance and widespread discrimination against the Roma population.

Thank you.