

United Nations Human Rights Council
25th Session of the Working Group of the Universal Periodic Review
Review of Greece

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Statement by AUSTRIA

Since last summer Greece has witnessed an unprecedented influx of refugees and irregular migrants. The Greek authorities can be commended for the generally humane approach towards refugees. While welcoming the increase of accommodation capacity for asylum seekers, we can see from the UNHCR expert assessment that more concerted efforts are needed to provide accommodation, decent material conditions and access to healthcare as well as psychological and social support to asylum seekers. We urge the Greek authorities to address these questions making use of the comprehensive support structures provided by the EU and other partners. Particular attention must be given in our view to unaccompanied minors who should not be housed together with other refugees, but taken care of separately. Therefore, further adequate shelters for unaccompanied minors would be needed, including alternative options such as accommodation in host families.

Austria welcomes measures taken by the Greek authorities to fight domestic violence within the framework of the "National Programme on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women". In view of the critical findings made by the UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights in 2015 with regard to the high incidence of domestic violence in Greece we urge the Greek authorities however to step up their efforts and create a more substantial impact.

The recent report by the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment on its visit to Greece from 1 March this year highlights serious shortcomings in the administration of justice such as overcrowding of prisons and chronic shortage of staff. These and other areas of concern such as the insufficient provision of health-care services or the widespread problem of inter-prisoner violence should be addressed as a matter of priority.

Austria offers the following additional recommendations:

- Urgently strengthen the capacities of the Asylum Service
- Ensure adequate reception conditions so that asylum seekers receive support in line with the requirements of the European Convention on Human Rights and of European Union law.
- Reduce overcrowding and ensure that prison conditions in Greece meet international human rights standards
- Intensify efforts to combat violence against women and domestic violence and ratify the Istanbul Convention