**United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland**

**Statement**

**45th Universal Periodic Review – Slovakia**

**Monday 6 May 2024**

Thank you, Mr President,

We welcome the recent steps taken by Slovakia to reduce the segregation of Roma children from mainstream education, though we note the persistent, systemic discrimination this minority faces.

We are concerned over recent reports that the protection of journalists in Slovakia is deteriorating. Many now face verbal attacks – including from politicians - and physical violence. It is also worrying how frequent the criminal offence of defamation is used to intimidate journalists and media outlets.

The various reported threats to the reproductive and sexual health rights of women in Slovakia is also of conern, especially the legislative attempts to further restrict access to safe abortions.

We recommend that Slovakia:

1. Adopts legislative measures aimed at protecting the safety of journalists and increasing media freedom, including repeal of defamation as a criminal offence.
2. Ensures access to safe abortion by removing legislative and non-legislative barriers, and protecting - rather than restricting - existing rights in the field of sexual and reproductive health.
3. Takes steps to protect journalists and human rights defenders from violence, harassment and intimidation – including from politicians - and to investigate all such incidents to enable such actors to carry out their activities in safe conditions.

Thank you.