**Statement by**

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*Mr Chair,*

*Excellences,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is my honour to present Slovenia's fourth national report to the Universal Periodic Review.

The report reflects an inclusive process involving ministries,government institutions, the Human Rights Ombudsman and the Advocate of the Principle of Equality. In drafting the report, the civil society was consulted, and their perspectives were taken into account wherever feasible.

Slovenia was founded on **the commitment to respect, protect and fulfil human rights;** and we continue to uphold this and will do so, also in the future.

For us, the **UPR is an additional incentive to improve the human rights situation** in Slovenia. Your comments and recommendations are extremely valuable, and our Government takes them seriously. The systematic monitoring of the implementation is ensured by the Inter-ministerial Commission on Human Rights. A voluntary mid-term report was submitted in March 2022.

The protection and promotion of human rights is part of our responsibility for a just world, and as such a guiding principle of Slovenia's new Foreign Policy Strategy. Our international activities go hand in hand with our efforts to further improve the human rights situation at home. We thus welcome today’s opportunity to look constructively into how Slovenia is faring domestically, and what we could do better in response to human rights challenges.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to report that Slovenia has **fully or partially implemented all but two of the 182 accepted recommendations** from the previous cycle.

I will briefly present **some important achievements in the field of human rights** in Slovenia in the period under review. A more detailed presentation will be provided afterwards by the deputy head and other members of the delegation.

Slovenia has a strong national human rights protection framework with **two independent national human rights institutions**: the Human Rights Ombudsman and the Advocate for the Principle of Equality. In recent years, the role of both has been strengthened and their funding increased. In 2021, the Ombudsman received the "A" status accreditation under the Paris Principles.

Slovenia recognises the social harm and unacceptability of **hate speech**. The key challenges remain identifying new forms of hate speech, raising awareness in society and connecting stakeholders responsible for preventing hate speech. To this end a Strategic Council for the Prevention of Hate Speech was established in 2023 as an independent advisory body.

Also in 2023, the Criminal Code was amended**,** introducing hate crime in our legal order.

The promotion of tolerance and respect for diversity continue to be among the goals of the public education system, as well as among the tasks of the public media.

To raise awareness of the unacceptability of hate speech and offensive language, and of online violence, we've organised, for example, two national campaigns –"Bite Your Hateful Tongue!” and “Don't Roast When You Post”.

Hate speech will be further regulated with the upcoming changes to the Media Act.

In the area of economic and social rights, important steps have been made toward **long-term care and housing**. The Long-Term Care Act**,** adopted in2023**,** empowers individuals to determine how they access their care entitlements.

Currently, Slovenia is undertaking a comprehensive housing reform aimed at increasing the number of affordable public rental housing. A Strategy to Prevent and End Homelessness in Slovenia 2025–2035 is set to be adopted in early 2025.

Slovenia has put a lot of efforts for a more **gender-balanced society**. In 2022, the glass ceiling was broken in the political sphere with the first woman President of the Republic and the first woman President of the National Assembly. In parliamentary elections, almost 40% of those elected to the parliament were women.

We continue to promote gender equality in all areas of economic, political and social life. The measures are included in the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2023–2030.

To tackle domestic violence and violence against women more effectively, specific measures were set up in the **National Programme for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Violence against Women 2024–2029**. In 2021, amendments to the Criminal Code introduced an affirmative consent model in relation to rape.

Slovenia took important legislative steps to guarantee increased inclusion of **persons with disabilities**. In 2021, Slovenia amended the Constitution to recognize the right to the free use and development of Slovenian Sign Language and, as the first country in the world, the tactile sign language used by deafblind persons.

Last year the **National Assembly Elections Act** was amended to abolish disenfranchisement of persons under guardianship due to intellectual or psychosocial impairments. This important change was implemented already during the European elections in June 2024.

An important step was made also in **child protection**. In 2022, a first Barnahus - Children’s House was established in Slovenia to support child victims of sexual abuse and other criminal offences.

In accordance with the Constitution, Slovenia continues to fulfil the rights of **Italian and Hungarian national communities and the Roma**. In this regard, Slovenia is implementing the Programme of Measures related to the special rights of the Italian and Hungarian national communities 2021–2025 and the National Programme of Measures for Roma 2021–2030.

In the period under review, relevant governmental institutions together with other stakeholders and Roma organisations adopted various measures and carried out several projects and activities to improve the wellbeing of Roma population in Slovenia.

The Strategy for the Education of Romawas updated in 2021 to improve the educational opportunities of Roma children and young people. In addition, multi-purpose Roma centres were established to provide vital support for integrating Roma children into the education system and offering workshops for the social activation and empowerment of Roma individuals.

Significant strides were made in promoting Roma culture and language, highlighting the rich cultural heritage of the Roma community and enhancing public understanding.

A lot has been done to improve the living conditions of the Roma population. Electricity, drinking water and sanitation are available in all legal settlements - that is, around 80% of all Roma settlements.

Allow me to note that in 2024 the Act on the Cultural Rights of **Members of National Communities of the Former Yugoslavia** was adopted thus reaffirming the rights and existing dialogue between the Government and members of these national communities.

In the area of **migration**, 2023 saw the adoption of the Integration Strategy and 2024 the adoption of the new Strategy on Immigration. Relevant legislation was also amended. All these efforts aim to protect the life and dignity of migrants, including those most vulnerable, and create conditions that enable persons, who have come to Slovenia, to live with dignity, autonomy and independence.

Additional measures were taken to ensure accommodation capacities for asylum seekers and applicants for international protection, which were under considerable strain, particularly from 2020 to 2023. In 2024, Slovenia established permanent accommodation centers dedicated to unaccompanied minors, regardless of their legal status. For the first time, professional teams are providing coordinated and holistic support to these children.

With regard to the so-called "**erased persons**", the Constitutional Court confirmed, in 2024, the national legislation that regulates the compensation for damage sustained due to erasure from the register of permanent residents. Slovenia continues to work on a case by case basis helping those that have not yet acquired the status. Last December, on Human Rights Day, the President of the Republic of Slovenia conferred a special award to the Erased Persons for their work in human rights.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Slovenia is one of the countries with the lowest number of **unimplemented judgments of the European Court of Human Rights**. This is the result of a well-planned and coordinated process, supported by an intergovernmental working group and a project unit for coordinating the implementation of the Strasbourg Court judgments.

Last but not least, I am pleased to report that in 2021 Slovenia ratified the **International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance**.

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Let me now turn to some advance questions submitted to us by Portugal, Germany and Belgium

Regarding the **national mechanism for coordinating the implementation of the UPR recommendations** – the question by Portugal, the Government established an Inter-ministerial Commission on Human Rights in 2013 that includes representatives of all ministries and relevant governmental offices, the civil society and the academia. A standing invitation is issued to the Ombudsman and the Equality Advocate. It manages the national process of reporting to UN treaty bodies and regional organisations, and oversees the follow-up process on the recommendations received. Since 2019, the implementation of the accepted UPR recommendations is a standing item on its agenda.

Regarding the advance question by Germany on **Antisemitism,** let me inform that in 2024,the prosecutors' offices in Slovenia dealt with 4 indictments of committing an offence with anti-Semitic motives. In all four cases, the charges were for hate speech.

Recently a Government Council was set up to monitor the implementation of the Strategy on Combating Antisemitism, which was adopted in December 2023. The Council is composed of representatives of the relevant ministries, the police, the Equality Advocate, all Jewish organizations functioning in Slovenia, and organizations involved in the preservation of local Jewish culture.

Regarding the Belgium's advance questions on **ratifications**, allow me to inform that Slovenia plans to ratify the Violence and Harassment Convention. The process is in the stage of the inter-ministerial consultations.

The possibilities and implications of ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are still being examined.

The ratification of the ILO Convention on Domestic Workers is for the time being not envisaged. However, under Slovenian legal order, domestic workers are entitled to the full scope of rights as all other workers in an employment relationship.

In addition, let me inform that the Government of Slovenia this month submitted to the Parliamentary procedure the draft Law on ratification of the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

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To conclude, let me thank all the delegations taking part in today's session. I look forward to your questions and recommendations, and my delegation and I stand ready to answer any further questions.