**Statement by Ms. Nino Tsatsiashvili,**

**Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia**

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Ladies and Gentleman, it is my honour to be part of this important dialogue and have a possibility to address your advance questions.

Human rights protection is ultimate goal for the Government. Major steps were made in this direction, and let me bring to your attention the work, that the Ministry of Internal Affairs has undertaken.

HRPD

We all understand, that there will be no success in reforms or developments without the protection of human rights. Therefore, we have started the implementation of our latest reforms’ agenda - so-called “Systemic Upgrade” with the creation of Human Rights Protection Department back in 2018.

The main aim of this department is to introduce completely new standards for human rights protection within the police and beyond, and also address major shortcomings that were identified over the years by local and international organizations.

Department has a very specific task - to provide timely and effective response among others to crimes, like domestic violence, violence against women and hate crimes.

Department monitors the process of investigation of the abovementioned crimes, develops recommendations and closely cooperates with non-governmental organizations.

With this department, MIA has started changing the attitudes of the police officers towards sensitive groups and specific crimes.

As a result of this policy, today, police officers are much more effective in response to each fact of violence compared to the previous years.

There are much less cases that involve discriminatory motive expressed by the law enforcement officers, cases of inappropriate responses by police have been minimized, perpetrators are mostly criminally charged in a timely manner.

Let me mention, some important steps undertaken in fighting domestic violence and hate crime:

- Establishment of Witness and Victim Coordinator Service, that supports witness and victim in the process of investigation, ensure their awareness and access to social services;

- Improved legislation and stricter liability;

- New risk assessment system, that allows prevention at early stage of violence;

- GPS monitoring system for high-risk offenders;

- Strict policy against abusive police officers;

- Special guideline to assist the investigator in identifying discriminatory motives;

- Intenstive trainings for police and active awareness raising campaigns.

As a result of improved policy and practice, reporting to police has significantly increased. Measures undertaken have resulted into tripled number of investigations, both in hate crimes and domestic violence.

One of the latest challenges was possible growth of domestic violence during lockdowns. We had active communication with population in this regard and elaborated short massages, including in minority languages and sent it out to every cell phone number. The text contained notes on the domestic violence and alternative ways for reporting to police, accompanied with the link of mobile application of – 112 with SOS and Chat feature.

Fortunately, we have not observed negative developments during pandemic.

LGBT freedom of assembly

Apart from increasing the effectiveness of the investigation of hate crimes, one of the priorities of the Ministry is the insurance of the right to expression and assembly of each citizen irrespective of their political views, religious belief, sexual orientation and any other signs.

The vivid examples are number of rallies, including on May 17, held by representatives of minorities, during which the MIA maintained safety of rally participants and availed them with the possibility to freely express their opinion. The persons exerting violence were arrested immediately.

This kind of violence on the grounds of discrimination is unacceptable. MIA has been responding to each fact and will respond in the future as well.

*Asylum*

Georgia has rapidly strengthened its asylum system and became fully compliant with the 1951 UN Convention.

National Security considerations is one of the grounds for rejecting to grant international protection. The decision on international protection ensures the balance between the rights of asylum seeker and state security interests.

Rejections based on national security ground is fairly low - in 2019 we had only 32 (7.86%) out of 407 overall rejections, while in 2020 only 19 (5,4%) out of 351 rejections.

Given rejections, can be appealed and the Court has full access to security information, as well as Public Defender.

Finally yet importantly, let me mention Temporary Detention Isolators and last visit of CPT delegation, who received a very positive impression of the sustained efforts, aimed at combating police ill-treatment; The delegation has received hardly any allegations of ill-treatment by police officers.

While MIA has achieved significant progress in mentioned areas, of course, challenges still remain and we spare no effort to further advance the system.

Honourable Delegates, thank you for your attention!