Madam Vice-President,

Distinguished Representatives of Member States,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me briefly react to comments that has already been made and questions presented.

**Rule of law**

The annual Rule of Law report from 2021 by the European Commission, confirms that justice system in Lithuania continues to present good results in terms of efficiency. Widely used digital tools greatly contributed to ensuring the continued functioning of courts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Hate crime and hate speech**

Responding to comments made by delegations of Slovakia and others Lithuania is fully committed to fight against hate crime and hate speech and supports the initiative of the European Commission to extend the list of EU crimes to hate speech and hate crime.

Although we have one of the widest range of specific grounds criminalized in terms of hate speech and hate crimes, a draft law proposes additionally to include the “colour of skin” and “ethnic origin”. This information is relevant to recommendation made by delegation of Bahamas.

**Situation on prisons’ conditions**

In response to comments made by China and Venezuela, I’d like to underline, that modernization of penitentiary institutions and improvement of material conditions remain the highest priority of the Government. We glad to note the positive evaluation of the situation in Lithuania by the UN Committee against Torture during the discussion on Lithuania’s fourth periodic report in November last year.

I’d like to mentioned four issues:

* the Criminal Code was supplemented by a new offense of torture.
* the legislation extended possibility for application of bail;
* a draft law proposes strict and exceptional conditions for the application of detention.
* a planned substantial revision of the Criminal Code aims to ensure that criminal liability is applied only as an *ultima ratio* measure.

**Partnership**

On the issue of partnership and in response to the question of the honourable delegation of Sweden and comments made by Canada, Denmark, Finland, Israel, the Netherlands, and Norway, it is noted that the draft law on partnership was prepared by the group of the Members of Parliament. However, it did not find necessary support upon its’ presentation in the Parliament in May last year. Despite that, the issue is on the political agenda and the internal discussions continues.

**Transgender**

The Programme of the 18th Government pays particular attention to the human rights issues and human dignity. Although the recognition of the legal status of transgender persons remains an issue, some positive development can be observed. The Minister of Justice amended an order on the rules for changes of the names and surnames to enable a person diagnosed with transsexuality to change his or her name if he/she wishes to have names specific to the other sex. It attaches to legal certainty for transgender persons exercising their rights and legitimate interests and contributes to the dignity of transgender people. This information is relevant to the questions and recommendations of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Norway, Venezuela, and Mexico.

**Victims of crime**

The Law on Assistance to Victims of Crime establishes a comprehensive mechanism of assistance to victims of any crime. According to it, anyone affected by criminal offence, can receive assistance throughout whole criminal proceedings – access to all information needed, social and health care services, psychological and emotional assistance, temporary accommodation etc.

**Marital rape**

Answering the question of distinguished delegations of Belgium, Spain, Brazil and Panama on marital rape, I would like to emphasise that currently any form of sexual abuse, including marital rape is criminalised and it is confirmed by case law – there are court precedents when spouses are prosecuted and convicted for marital rape.

**Abortion**

Referring to the question submitted by respected delegation of Spain and comment made by Argentina, we wish to specify that in Lithuania criminal liability is provided not for abortions per se, but for illegal abortions. Only those performed not in a health care facility, or by a person who is not authorized or when there are medical contraindications are criminalized.

**Law on the Protection of Minors**

On the question of honourable delegations of Panama and Czechia’s concerning Law on the Protection of Minors we note that the monitoring of the application of the law does not indicate its’ discriminatory manner, thought a legislative amendments might be considered after the ECHR’s delivers judgment in relevant case.

Thank you.