**COMMENTS SUBMITTED TO THE 40TH SESSION OF THE UPR WORKING GROUP (review of Lithuania, 26 January 2022, 14:30 - 18:00)**

Speaker: Mr. Arunas Paulauskas, Deputy Police Commissioner General

Madam Vice-President,

Distinguished delegates

**Domestic Violence**

The Police makes considerable efforts to reduce the level of domestic violence in Lithuania.
We pay particular attention not only to responding to reports of domestic violence and effectively conducting pre-trial investigations, but also to preventive activities. For example, after receipt of a report potentially related to domestic violence (verbal conflicts, etc.) and in the absence of indications to qualify the activity as a crime, police officers are obliged to revisit the reporting person within 3 days and make sure that there have been no new conflicts that would threaten him or her after the initial visit.  In 2021, 46 000 revisits were registered. In addition, the Police performs proactive preventive measures to identify addresses (persons) at increased risk of domestic violence and carry out preventive activities. In 2021, 6 508 preventive measures were taken against 654 abusers. The Police as well actively performs awareness raising campaigns, by which at least 77 000 persons were reached in 2021.

Since 2012 the number of reports of domestic violence has steadily increased.  In 2017 and 2018 the number decreased, but in 2019 it started to grow again and reached 53 000, in 2020 -58 000, in 2021- there were 56 000 reports. A rapid increase of reports by 20% in 2020 was affected by the restrictions related to COVID 19. These restrictions obliged people to spend more time in their houses than usual and led not only to an increase in psychological tensions within families but to acts of violence within families as well. Reacting to that the Police immediately took additional preventive measures. As a result, the number of reports stabilized and in 2020 remained the same as in the previous years. At the same time, other measures were taken in order to increase the possibilities for persons to report domestic violence, e. g. to report by writing a short message to our emergency number 112 or via the Police electronic website - epolicija.lt.

**Trafficking in human beings (THB).**

It is important to note that there has been a significant decline in the number of THB–related pre-trial investigations (2020-11, 2021-6) due to a number of factors, such as efforts already made and synergy of domestic institutions and agencies. For example, more than 90 police officers were specifically trained to effectively recognise potential victims of THB and provide them all necessary assistance. The training topic regarding recognition and first assistance to victims of THB was included into the basic training program of police recruits. It means every new police officer has a basic knowledge about this phenomenon and knows how to recognise and support victims of THB.

**Hate crimes.** Assessment of the trends which were influenced by Covid-19 pandemic, requirements restricting the movement of people and enhanced control of the public space, show a decrease in hate crimes in Lithuania. However, as in the rest of the world, a certain proportion of social communication has shifted to cyberspace in Lithuania, to Internet platforms including social networks, to mass media portals and chat forums, and it served as a gateway to a particularly speedy dissemination of information in cyberspace. The latter phenomenon has impacted a minor increase in the number of hate-driven criminal offences, i.e. from 52 offences in 2020 to 84 offences in 2021.

Among all registered crimes related to hatred based on race, or nationality, origin, sexual orientation, religion or other characteristics, a stable, unchanging tendency is being observed. Sexual orientation and nationality remained the predominant motives for hate.

In order to create a secure environment in cyberspace and to reduce hate speech manifestations, since 2021 virtual patrols have started working for the Lithuanian Police. Their key function is an intensive monitoring of the Internet which is related to the prevention of criminal and administrative offences in cyberspace. By the efforts of cyberpatrols 15 investigations of acts of hate speech were started in 2021. Moreover, due to acts of offensive speech 54 persons were officially warned by cyberpatrols during the same period.