**ITALY**



***Inter-ministerial Committee for Human Rights***

***Comitato Interministeriale per i Diritti Umani***

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

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**FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ITALY,**

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# *Thanks Mr. President, Amb. Coly Seck,*

# *Distinguished delegates,*

# *Ladies and Gentlemen,*

At the outset, it is a great honour to address, on behalf of the Italian Government, this eminent Body and unique Forum as Italy is firmly convinced of the primary role of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights, for all.

In this respect, allow me to introduce the Italian Delegation, consisting of colleagues from the main Institutions contributing to the elaboration of both the mid-term report, submitted in 2017, and the national report of Italy for this Universal Periodic Review Cycle. Sitting next to me are the President of the Inter-ministerial Committee for Human Rights, Minister Plenipotentiary Fabrizio Petri, the President of the Senate’s Extraordinary Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, Her Excellency Senator Ms. Stefania Pucciarelli, and the President of the Permanent Human Rights Committee of the Chamber of Deputies, Her Excellency Honourable Ms. Iolanda Di Stasio.

I am sincerely pleased that Representatives from so many countries have registered to take the floor during this morning’s session. It shows the success and effectiveness of the Universal Periodic Review as the global mechanism for effective dialogue and cooperation.

Since last Italian Review under Cycle two, October 2014, many changes have occurred both internationally and domestically. “In a world of trouble”, to quote the UN Secretary-General, the maintenance of peace and security, sustainable economic and social development and the promotion and protection of human rights, also in light of United Nation 2030 Agenda, must and do stand firm. In such a context, we do reaffirm that it is essential to guarantee fundamental rights for all, including protection against all forms of violence and intersecting discrimination, security, welfare, and gender equality.

Indeed, the human being is at the core of the “inclusive humanity”, to quote the Italian President of Council of Ministers, Mr. Giuseppe Conte, something that we know we all strive for.

Against this background, allow me to recall the Italian Constitution of 1948, coeval with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Our rigid Constitution protects all rights and fundamental freedoms, envisaged by international standards, starting with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Within this framework, Article 3 of the Italian Constitution, devoted to the principle of formal and substantive equality, guides the powers and functions of the State.

In light of this, I would like to use the allotted time, to both illustrate the latest domestic developments and reply, as far as possible, to the advance questions.

The newly established Government of Italy, led by Mr. Giuseppe Conte, took office last September 5, 2019.

The Italian Government thus takes this opportunity to reaffirm its will to establish an Independent National Human Rights Institution. In this regard I would like to highlight that the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Parliament has just scheduled a debate on the Draft Law to establish an independent National Human Rights Institution, for next November 18, 2019.

As for the question about a National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up, we take this opportunity to underline that Italy established since 1978 the Inter-ministerial Committee for Human Rights. The just released United Nations document “Compilation on Italy” indicates that this Body is “internationally recognized as a best practice”. The Italian Inter-ministerial Committee for Human Rights works in a multi-stakeholderand participatory approach, and it will remain deeply committed in his role as National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up.

Turning to substantial issues, allow me to stress the specific focus of the Italian Government on gender equality. Among the institutional novelties, the appointment of a Minister for Equal Opportunities and the Family is to be highlighted. Along these lines, a strategic framework for gender equality is being planned. This strategic framework will support social and economic empowerment of women and girls, as well as gender mainstreaming strengthening, at all policy levels.

In this context, allow me to recall that at the last elections, women parliamentarians’ rate increased to 35.4%. Moreover, last July 2019, the Parliament approved the so-called Red Code, Act No. 69/2019, which, among other things, refers to a preferential and urgent judicial pathway, including the right to be heard by the public prosecutor, within three days from *notitia criminis* registration. It also includes new crimes, such as forced marriage, disfiguring permanently one’s face by acid attack, and illicit distribution of sexually-explicit images or videos.

With regard to the Istanbul Convention, Italy attaches the utmost importance to its enactment. Operational measures have been put in place within the framework of the National Strategic Plan on Male Violence against Women, 2017 – 2020, which promotes multilevel governance. Moreover in November 2018 such Plan was complemented by an Operational Plan to translate it into a result-oriented instrument. This Operational Plan also significantly increases Department for Equal Opportunities resources for both the years 2018 and 2019, besides indicating the actions to be covered by the 2020 Stability Law resources.

As for the alignment between Anti-Trafficking Plan and the National Strategy to tackle labour exploitation inagriculture, the so-called “Caporalato”, this is ensured by the Department for Equal Opportunities participation in both Plans. In particular, the former provides for a referral system**,** which is currently under evaluation for possible replication in the latter. In any case, the drafting of the new Anti-Trafficking Plan is proceeding in parallel with the work of the Institutional Round-Table on Labour Exploitation.

The Italian Government attaches the utmost importance to the fight against poverty. Let me mention, starting from April 2019, the so-called “Universal Basic Income”, “*Reddito di Cittadinanza”*, which is a universal measure. In terms of data, as at 4 September 2019, the National Institute of Social Security received about 1 million and five hundred thousand applications.. Out of them 1 million were accepted, and they refer to over two million and two hundred thousand people. Among the beneficiaries, about three hundred forty-five thousand households have children; and about two hundred thousand households, enjoying Universal Basic Income, include persons with disabilities.

As for racism,we would like to recall, among the many normative, institutional and operational measures, the role of the National Office against Racial Discrimination. With regard to hate speech, especially online, this Office set upin November 2015 the Media ad Internet Observatory, thus expanding its monitoring activities. The Office also cooperates with European Commission, on implementing the “Code of Conduct on countering illegal speech online”. More recently, last October 30, 2019, the Italian Senate established an extraordinary Commission to fight against the phenomena of intolerance, racism, anti-semitism and incitement to hatred and violence.

The National Office against Racial Discrimination is also Focal Point for the National Roma Inclusion Strategy, 2012 – 2020. Under this Strategy many integrated measures have been put in place across the country in the field of education, labour, housing, and health, while paying the utmost attention to racial discrimination, hatred and xenophobia. Within the above Strategy, I would like to recall: several surveys on Roma transition to formal housing solutions; coordination activities with local administrations on Roma, Sinti and Caminanti housing; and the implementation of the “Local Action Plans Projects”.

Allow me to stress, also, that one of the strategic lines of governmental action for the promotion of equal opportunities and protection of rights concerns the prevention and the fight against discrimination, on the ground of sexual orientation and gender identity.

As for migrations, no country can tackle this challenge alone. This is a phenomenon, which cannot be considered of a transitional or temporary nature. Indeed, it requires comprehensive measures, both in the short run and in the medium-long term. More generally, to facilitating the arrival of particularly vulnerable refugees, Italy is committed through three different channels: humanitarian corridors; resettlement; and humanitarian evacuations.

Against this background, the “October 2018 Security Law-Decree” envisages the re-organization and rationalization of the Italian reception system. It concerns the following categories of “migrants”:

* “asylum-seekers”, who are hosted in first-level reception and continue to enjoy relevant services in full compliance with EU Directive 2013/33/EU;
* “international protection holders”, “residence permits holders for special cases” and “unaccompanied foreign minors” who fall within the second-level assistance, namely the SIPROIMI system. In continuity with the previous legislation, the SIPROIMI offers comprehensive assistance. The *rationale* is to facilitate the integration of those persons entitled to reside legally and for an extended period of time in the Italian territory, while, at the same time, not precluding the possibility of integration for asylum-seekers - pending the definition of their status.

Moreover, Italian Authorities promote a plethora of projects and interventions in the field of asylum and regular migration of which integration is a key component.

In the field of anti-corruption, Italy introduced in 2017 the very important provisions on the protection of whistle-blowers, both in the public and private sector. Building on this, allow me to recall that the Italian anticorruption legal framework was further integrated in January 2019 by the so-called “Bribe Destroyer Law”, “*Legge Spazzacorrotti*”. This is a Law that establishes additional provisions to fight public sector corruption and to increase transparency requirements in the private sector.

As for judicial efficiency, allow me to recall the recent Bill on delegations to the government for the efficiency of the trials and the overall reform of the judiciary. Under this Bill several reforms are envisaged according to the objectives of simplification, expeditiousness and rationalization of both the criminal and civil proceedings.

In order to tackle overcrowding, the Ministry of Justice-Department of Penitentiary Administration started widening the penitentiary real estate by acquiring military barracks fallen into disuse, to be transformed into prisons, in addition to new more detention blocks. Five thousand new places shall be built in the next five years, in order to achieve the objective of 60,000 regular detention places available.

Since 2017 the improvement of prison conditions has been accelerated following the increase in funds, to progressively reduce the critical structural conditions affecting prison life. Moreover, the capacity of every single prison of Italy is under constant monitoring through the Detention Places Software, established at the Headquarters’ Situation Room, to know not only the number of prisoners present in each prison, but also their assignment in each prison wing and the space available to each inmate. It enables to alerting the prison governor to an immediate intervention and to adopt any adequate modification to stop the critical situation.

In order to provide prisoners with life conditions as close as possible to life at liberty, and in order to offer them a more effective rehabilitation, the Penitentiary Administration has outlined a new modality of managing detention wings and new criteria to assign inmates. Prison security is then more and more oriented to a dynamic security system, based on the knowledge of inmates and on dialogue with them.

As for the National Preventive Mechanism, it was established in 2014, in line with the United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture, and its overall structure and already strong independence have been recently enhanced by a Decree of the Italian President of the Council of Ministers.

As for the media freedom, I would like to stress that many normative, institutional and operational instruments are in place. The “National Independent Regulatory Authority on Communications” covers all segments in the communications sector in Italy. Worthy of mention is also the “Integrated Communications System”, which comprises all the main media business sectors’ actors. Moreover the Ministry of Interior established in December 2017, the "Coordination Center for monitoring, analysis and permanent exchange of information on the phenomenon of intimidating acts against journalists". This body, chaired by the Minister of Interior, involves representatives from the communications sector, aimed, among other things, to define specific measures for the protection of press freedom. In particular, it promptly intervenes with protection measures, in the event of intimidation and threats against journalists.

Finally, I wish to reiterate that Italy significantly includes the dignity of life and environmental health among human rights. For this reason we have launched the “Universal Basic Income”, which brought more than 2 million individuals out of absolute poverty, and the “Green New Deal”. Italy is concretely committed to achieving Sustainable Development Goals, also by working closely with the private sector and the Italian Civil Society Organizations. This approach has been reinforced by our first National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights. This Plan, which focuses on vulnerable groups such as migrants, women, persons with disabilities, children and LGBTI persons, underlines the centrality of decent work, as highlighted by Goal 8 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda. In 2018, Italy was the first country to undertake a mid-term review of the Plan, the outcome of which was shared on the occasion of the 2018 United Nations Business and Human Rights Forum.

To conclude, I thank you all, on behalf of the Italian delegation and myself, for this opportunity and for all the questions and recommendations, which will be put forward during our today’s dialogue.