



**Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR)**

**Input to the OHCHR's call  
on best practices among national human rights institutions  
pursuant to GA resolution 76/170**

**May 2023**



*The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) is the independent advisory body to the Greek State on matters pertaining to human rights protection and the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI). It was established with Law 2667/1998 in accordance with the UN Paris Principles and is governed by Law 4780/2021. Its members are persons appointed by twenty institutions (independent Authorities, third level trade unions, NGOs, universities and research institutions)*

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## **Input to the OHCHR's call on best practices\***

### **I. Introduction**

This paper highlights three best practices of the Greek NHRI that serve as inspiring examples of effective approaches to promoting human rights: The operation of a Recording Mechanism for Incidents of Informal Forced Returns, the facilitation of KlimaSeniorinnen's visit to Greece, and reaching out to wider audience on combating gender stereotypes. These initiatives demonstrate the powerful role of NHRIs in promoting human rights in a transparent and inclusive way, while making use of innovative strategies.

Although they target different audiences and respond to different aspects of human rights, these three best practices demonstrate the role of NHRIs to act proactively and in collaboration with different actors in promoting and protecting human rights. In particular:

(a) The Recording Mechanism's establishment and operation represent a significant step forward enhancing accountability for human rights violations through the systematic recording of push-back testimonies while its own mode of operation build bridges between civil society active in the field, the country's NHRI and the competent authorities. Taking note of similar challenges faced by other NHRIs, in Europe and globally where violations at border occur, the Recording Mechanism can serve as a best practice.

(b) The facilitation of the KlimaSeniorinnen's visit to Greece where particular groups and the wider audience had the chance to get acquainted with the human parameter of climate change, to understand the role that civil society can play in claiming the protection of rights of the present and future generations before judicial bodies offers a best practice model for similar initiatives in other countries since climate crisis is a global phenomenon.

(c) Gender inequality still persists in Greece, despite the overall progress in the enjoyment of human rights of people residing in Greece during the last century. The GNCHR has prioritized the promotion of gender issues in its 2022 and 2023 strategic planning. In the last two years, scientific reports, educational activities and promotional campaigns are focused on combatting gender stereotypes and promoting the substantial equality of women and men in Greece. With this contribution, the GNCHR would like to provide more information on its recent public awareness activities on gender equality through education and outreach, hoping to inspire other NHRIs in addressing gender equality in a holistic and effective way.

### **II. The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR)**

The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) was established by Law 2667/1998 as the independent advisory body to the Greek State in accordance with Paris Principles adopted by the United Nations (General Assembly Resolution A/RES/48/134,

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20.12.1993, “National Institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights” (NHRIs) and is the National Institution for the protection and promotion of Human Rights (NHRI) in Greece. The founding legislation of GNCHR was amended by Law 4780/2021, the provisions of which now govern the operation of the Greek National Commission. Under these provisions, the GNCHR has acquired legal personality, functional, administrative and financial independence. Since 2001, the GNCHR, was accredited as an A’ status NHRI, (full compliance, in accordance with the UN Paris Principles) by the competent GANHRI Sub – Committee on Accreditation, in recognition of its substantial independence and effective fulfillment of its role.

According to Law 4780/21, the mission of GNCHR consists of:

- The constant monitoring of developments regarding human rights protection, the continuous briefing and promotion of the relevant research.
- The maintenance of permanent contacts and co-operation with international organizations, such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, National Human Rights Institutions of other States, as well as with national or international Non-Governmental Organizations.
- The formulation of policy advice on human rights issues.

Moreover, in the context of its mission, the GNCHR has the responsibility to raise awareness among all State bodies of the need for effective protection of human rights, to inform public opinion about the risks of human rights violations and, above all, to provide guidelines to the Greek State aimed at the establishment of a modern, principled policy of human rights protection.

An additional guarantee of GNCHR’s independence is its pluralistic and polyphonic composition, which allows and develops a unique dialogue between the various bodies of civil society and the State. Its Plenary consists of a total of 20 members designated by Independent Authorities, Universities, Research Institutions, tertiary Trade Union organisations, Civil Society organisations, and Bar Associations. In the Plenary of the Commission are represented, through liaisons, the Greek Parliament by the Chairman of the Special Permanent Committee on Institutions and Transparency, the Ministries, and the parliamentary parties.

### **III. Best practices**

#### **1. The Recording Mechanism of Incidents of Informal Forced Returns**

Despite repeated calls by the GNCHR and other national and international bodies, the Greek Government continued to deny allegations of pushbacks, summary returns, and other forms of informal forced removals of third-country nationals at the Greek-Turkish sea and land borders. Relevant stakeholders have reported a gradual but steady consolidation of the

phenomenon, with a repeated methodology<sup>1</sup>. In this regard, authoritative investigation procedures on the reported incidents need to be established or enhanced as many incidents seem to remain severely underreported to the authorities possibly due to a lack of trust, fear or experience of forced return, detention, or intimidation.

The GNCHR, in order to tackle these important challenges and following the good example of the Racist Violence Recording Mechanism<sup>2</sup> has established, the **Recording Mechanism of Incidents of Informal Forced Returns** (hereafter: the Recording Mechanism) by a decision of its Plenary in September 2021 as the response of the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) following **two major findings: a) the absence of an official and effective data collection mechanism of informal forced returns; and b) the need for coordination among organizations who record on their own initiative any alleged incidents of informal forced returns from persons who recourse to their services.**

One of the main objectives of the Recording Mechanism is **the promotion and consolidation of respect for the principle of non-refoulement in Greece, which is the cornerstone of international refugee law**, enshrined also in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Art. 19) and EU Directives of the Common European Asylum System, as well as the safeguarding of guarantees and legal procedures provided by EU law such as *access to asylum (Art. 18 FRC)*. In addition, the Mechanism **will strengthen accountability for alleged human rights violations occurring during informal forced returns of third-country nationals, which lies at the core of the fundamental value of the rule of law.**

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<sup>1</sup>[UNHCR Press Release](#) «UNHCR calls on Greece to investigate pushbacks at sea and land borders with Turkey», June 2020. [UNHCR Press Release](#) «UNHCR concerned by pushback reports, calls for protection of refugees and asylum-seekers», August 2020, [UNHCR Press Release](#) «UNHCR warns asylum under attack at Europe's borders, urges end to pushbacks and violence against refugees», January 2021, [IOM Press Release](#) «IOM Alarmed over Reports of Pushbacks from Greece at EU Border with Turkey», June 2020, [IOM Press Release](#) «IOM Concerned about Increasing Deaths on Greece-Turkey Border», February 2022, UN Committee Against Torture, [CAT/C/GRC/CO/7: Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Greece](#), September 2019, UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention: [Preliminary Findings from its visit to Greece \(2 - 13 December 2019\)](#), December 2019, UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, [Report on means to address the human rights impact of pushbacks of migrants on land and at sea](#), May 2021, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, [Report of the Commissioner after her visit to Greece on 25-29 June 2018](#), November 2018, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, [Statement of the Commissioner «Time to immediately act and to address humanitarian and protection needs of people trapped between Turkey and Greece»](#), March 2020, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, [Letter by the Commissioner to the Ministers of Citizen's Protection, of Migration and Asylum, and of Shipping and Island Policy of Greece](#), May 2021, European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), [Report to the Greek Government on the visit to Greece carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment \(CPT\) from 10 to 19 April 2018](#), February 2019, European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), [Report to the Greek Government on the visit to Greece carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment \(CPT\) from 13 to 17 March 2020](#), November 2020, Greek Ombudsman, [Interim Report on the alleged pushbacks to Turkey of foreign nationals who had arrived in Greece seeking international protection](#), January 2021.

<sup>2</sup> The Racist Violence Recording Network (RVRN) is an initiative of the Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Greece (UNHCR). The RVRN is comprised of actors offering medical, social, legal services or/and coming in direct contact with victims of racist violence or victims of other hate- or bias-motivated violent attacks, <https://rvrn.org/en/>



Respect for human rights, diversity, multiculturalism, and tolerance, as well as action to promote third-country nationals' rights, are prerequisites for being a member of the Recording Mechanism. Members of the Recording Mechanism have legal personality and are legally represented in Greece. The validation of their legal personality and the alignment of their operational objectives with those of the Recording Mechanism, requires submission of their statutes to it. The Recording Mechanism operates under common rules applicable to all its members, who have adopted its Founding Act, which stipulates their rights and obligations are bound by the commitment to pursue its shared objectives, use its instruments, and apply its methodology.

So far, the following Civil Society Organizations are listed as members of the Recording Mechanism: Greek Council for Refugees (GCR), Hellenic League for Human Rights (HLHR), Network for Children's Rights, Medical Intervention (MedIn), METAdrasi – ACTION FOR MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT, Transgender Support Association (SYD), Refugee Support Aegean (RSA), HIAS Greece, Legal Centre Lesbos, Danish Refugee Council Greece, and Equal Rights Beyond Borders.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Office in Greece within the framework of its mandate, contributes its expertise and technical support to the Recording Mechanism, as a cooperating Agency.

The Recording Mechanism records, and reports on incidents of informal forced returns of third-country nationals from Greece to third countries regardless of their legal status in Greece, i.e., irrespective of whether they are irregular migrants, registered or unregistered asylum seekers or recognized refugees. The Recording Mechanism applies a standardized, transparent, and scientific recording methodology to increase the credibility of the reported incidents. Each member organization designates recording officers who are trained by the Supervisor of the Recording Mechanism on the methodology of the Recording Mechanism. The testimonies are being recorded by means of personal interviews conducted with the alleged victims of informal forced returns following their informed and written consent. The testimonies are recorded on a standardized Recording Form as developed by the Recording Mechanism following joint consultation meetings with its members and the UNHCR. The Recording Form is structured into various modules and sections (detection or informal arrest, informal detention or restriction of movement, physical removal, fate after removal), all of which gather detailed information on the identity of the alleged perpetrators, the places and times regarding each stage of the incident, from the detection of the victims in the Greek territory to their fate after their removal from the country, and record the alleged perpetrators' modus operandi. The Recording Forms are subject to quality control performed by the Recording Mechanism.

The Commission presented the Recording Mechanism at a **Press Conference** held at its premises on Tuesday 24 January 2023. During the Conference, the Recording Mechanism's mode of operation and methodology were presented, as well as several findings, recorded in its **first Interim Report** which is published both in **Greek and English**. The President of the

GNCHR, Professor Maria Gavouneli, opened the event by presenting the Recording Mechanism, while the Supervisor of the Recording Mechanism, Ilias Tsampardoukas presented an overview of the methodology of the Recording Mechanism and the main conclusions of its first Interim Report. The event was attended and addressed by the Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights – FRA, Michael O’ Flaherty through a video message, the Deputy Fundamental Rights Officer of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency – Frontex, Grigorios Tsioukas, the Chief of Mission of the IOM in Greece and Regional Response Coordinator, Gianluca Rocco, and the Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Greece (UNHCR), Maria-Clara Martin.

For the first interim report, the Recording Mechanism has recorded from February 2022 to December 2022 **50** incidents/operations of informal forced returns that, according to the testimonies, happened between Apr 2020 and Oct 2022, through **58** testimonial interviews with **43** alleged victims. According to the report, informal forced returns mostly involve individuals who have attempted to access the asylum procedure for the first time and were not registered by the competent authorities, but also recognized beneficiaries of international protection or registered asylum seekers whose expulsion violates the principle of non-refoulement. These incidents occur mainly but not exclusively near the border areas of the country and involve a recurring organized operational framework with cooperation among various alleged perpetrators and the use of logistical means such as facilities, heavy vehicles and/or watercraft. Testimonies reveal a staged approach to the process, including detection, detention or restriction of movement, and physical removal. Persons in uniform and civilians, including third-country nationals, appear to be involved in these operations, and violence is commonly reported during the physical removal stage. The Recording Mechanism, will present detailed qualitative and quantitative data on all the above in its annual full report scheduled to be published later this year.

More information about the Recording Mechanism can be found at the following links:

**1. Webpage:**

<https://nchr.gr/en/recording-mechanism.html>

**2. Interim report:**

[https://nchr.gr/images/pdf/nea\\_epikairothta/deltia\\_tupou/2023/Interim\\_Report\\_Mechanism\\_en.pdf](https://nchr.gr/images/pdf/nea_epikairothta/deltia_tupou/2023/Interim_Report_Mechanism_en.pdf)

**3. The video of the launch event** on the GNCHR youtube channel:

<https://youtu.be/IJ7t5MytCFc>

**4. Press Release:** Presentation of the Mechanism and its first Interim Report:

<https://nchr.gr/en/news/1544-press-release-presentation-of-the-recording-mechanism-of-incidents-of-informal-forced-returns-and-its-first-interim-report.html>

## 5. Video message of the EU FRA Director on the launching of the Recording Mechanism:

<https://nchr.gr/en/news/1548-eu-fra-director-on-the-launching-of-the-recording-mechanism-of-incidents-of-informal-forced-returns.html>

## 2. Climate movement and vulnerable groups

By engaging with the climate and feminist movements, the GNCHR plays a vital role to raise awareness about the importance of addressing climate change from a human rights perspective<sup>3</sup>. This involves highlighting the disproportionate impact of climate change on marginalized and vulnerable communities, such as elder women. The impact of climate change on elder women has become a prominent case by *KlimaSeniorinnen* (Climate Seniors Association) with their lawsuit in front of the ECtHR, which was discussed on 29 March 2023 before the Grand Chamber of the Court. The *KlimaSeniorinnen* is composed of women over 64 years old from Switzerland who, through their organization “Climate Seniors Association” have appealed against the Swiss government to the European Court of Human Rights, demanding action from their government against climate change. Their pioneering lawsuit and protest movement have attracted GNCHR’s attention and decided to facilitate their visit to Greece and schedule different outreach activities to launch the debate on climate movement and elder women for the first time in Greece in a holistic approach that includes a wide range of different actions and actors involved.

The Greek office of Greenpeace and the GNCHR, from January 24<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> 2023, hosted members of *KlimaSeniorinnen* in Greece. During their visit to our country, a series of actions and meetings were carried out to inform and raise awareness of the Greek public about the climate justice movements and actions taking place worldwide, as well as cultivating a broader framework for dialogue with civil society around the climate crisis, human rights, and vulnerable social groups.

The series of meetings was inaugurated on Tuesday, January 24<sup>th</sup>, with a tour of the “Invisible Routes” of the city organized by the street magazine of the homeless people in Athens named “Schedia”. During the tour, the activists wandered through areas such as Metaxourgeio and Vathi Square and met important social structures of Athens up close, such as the Polydynamon Homeless Centre, the Centre of Reception and Solidarity of the Athens Municipality, and the Doctors of the World (medecins du monde) clinic and social pharmacy. Through the tour and the personal narratives of the guides, the activists were informed about the lives of people living on the streets of Athens, while learning about the services provided by various organizations to combat homelessness, hunger, and social exclusion. The walk ended at the “Schedia House”, where graduate students from the Law, Political Science and Public Administration, Communication and Media departments of the University of Athens, as

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<sup>3</sup> See the thematic session of the GNCHR on environment: [ΕΕΔΑ - Εθνική Επιτροπή για τα Δικαιώματα του Ανθρώπου - ΠΕΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΝ \(nchr.gr\)](#)



well as volunteers from Greenpeace who participated in the tour, exchanged views with the KlimaSeniorinnen on the impact of the climate crisis on vulnerable social groups.

On Wednesday, January 25th, members of KlimaSeniorinnen had the opportunity to connect with the Greek public and media during an open event held at the Goethe-Institut Athens, on the topic of "Climate Movement - Human Rights - Vulnerable Social Groups". A large number of citizens attended both in person and online. The central speakers, besides Rosmarie Wydler-Wälti and Jutta Steiner from KlimaSeniorinnen, were Maria Gavouneli (President of the GNCHR, Professor of International Law at the Law School of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens), Nikos Charalampidis (Director of the Greek office of Greenpeace), Dr. Elizabeth Mestheneos (Sociology Ph.D., Researcher, former President of the Age Platform Europe, Member of the Board of Directors of "50plus Hellas") and Ioanna Markou (Co-founder of the Association of Women Over 40 - "A40s"). The discussion was moderated by the journalist - Communications Manager of ELIAMEP, Odini Linardatou.

On the fourth day of their visit to Athens, on Friday, January 27, the KlimaSeniorinnen met with the following organizations and groups of the women's movement, through the initiative of Greenpeace and the GNCHR, in the welcoming premises of the Greek League for Women's Rights: International Women's Union, DEPIK Kifissia, DEPIK Chalandri, European Women's Lobby, Democratic Women's Movement, Melissa Network, Orlando LGBT+, The Purple, Womanlandia, Women Act, Women On Top, and the Initiative Against Femicides. Drawing inspiration from KlimaSeniorinnen's actions, representatives of the organizations and groups exchanged views on how women are among the first vulnerable groups affected by every crisis, such as climate change, while agreeing that women's organizations can become active actors in addressing the climate crisis and expressed their interest in taking relevant actions.

The facilitation of KlimaSeniorinnen's visit to Greece by both the Greek NHRI and Greenpeace Greece represents a best practice in synergies between NHRIs and civil society in raising awareness on human rights issues, such as the climate change and its adverse impact to vulnerable social groups. Through a range of activities and events, the group effectively engaged with various stakeholders, including the general public, academic institutions, media, and women's organizations, to create a broader framework for dialogue and action. The tour of the "Invisible Routes" provided an opportunity to understand the challenges faced by vulnerable social groups, such as homelessness and hunger, and the work being done by various street organizations to combat these issues. The open event at the Goethe-Institut Athens brought together experts from various fields to discuss the intersection of climate change, human rights, and vulnerable social groups, generating a productive exchange of ideas and solutions. Finally, the meetings with women's organizations served as a vital step in mobilizing civil society towards collective action in addressing the climate crisis. The KlimaSeniorinnen's visit to Greece exemplifies the importance of civil society engagement in raising awareness and advocating for change, providing a powerful model for future initiatives. At the very least, the invitation of the KlimaSeniorinnen in Greece highlights the role of the GNCHR in promoting and protecting human rights, as well as their recognition of

the importance of civil society engagement in addressing complex challenges and critical issues such as the climate crisis.

More information on the awareness action on climate change and its adverse effects on vulnerable groups:

### **1. KlimaSiniorinnen in Greece**

<https://nchr.gr/ta-nea-mas/1553-klimaseniorinnen-2.html>

**2.** The video from the **open event “Climate Movement - Human Rights - Vulnerable Social Groups”** at the GNCHR youtube channel:

<https://youtu.be/HIOoP1xaOMQ>

### **3. Website KlimaSiniorinnen:**

<https://en.klimaseniorinnen.ch/>

## **3. Gender equality - "Empowerment of women and gender equality"**

The Greek National Commission has as its main mission since its establishment in 1998, the development of educational programs and activities aimed at cultivating respect for human rights within the educational system (Article 12 (t)), and raising public awareness and media attention on these issues (Article 12 (i)) of law 4780/2021. Additionally, the GNCHR closely monitors gender equality issues since its establishment, attaching utmost importance to the protection of women's rights<sup>4</sup>. This protection includes ensuring substantive equality and equal treatment of women in the exercise of all their economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights, as well as supporting all vulnerable groups of women, such as women with disabilities, Roma women, refugee women, immigrant women, LGBTQI+, and every woman who is a victim of gender-based and domestic violence. To this regard, the GNCHR has adopted a holistic tangible approach and according to its mandate created a cycle of open seminars in order to address gender inequalities along with 4 TV spots. It is worth mentioning that the above educational and promotional activities fall under a general strategic goal to enhance gender equality, which involves, in addition other activities such as the publication of a reference report on the substantive gender equality, meetings with international and regional bodies visiting Greece<sup>5</sup> with a mandate on women rights as well as mainstreaming the gender perspective in all GNCHR's contributions, opinions etc.

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<sup>4</sup> See the thematic session of the GNCHR on gender equality: [ΕΕΔΑ - Εθνική Επιτροπή για τα Δικαιώματα του Ανθρώπου - GENDER EQUALITY \(nchr.gr\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> On February 21, 2023, the Greek Commission welcomed the members of the GREVIO delegation at its premises and discussed with them issues of domestic violence and violence against women and LGBTQI+ persons. The role of the National Commission in promoting the effective implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Greece was emphasized, as well as the tools it develops for this purpose.

A) In 2022 and 2023, the GNCHR dedicated its open educational activities to the wider public in promoting awareness on gender equality issues. The cycle of six educational activities has the title "Empowerment of women and gender equality" and through different kind of education activities (online, in-person), targeting specific categories of professionals or the wider audience, different ages etc aims to respond to the needs of the public on human rights education on women's issues. In 2022 the following activities were organized: an open lecture by the historian and writer Ms Lena Divani on "The position of the Greek woman in history and the contemporary Greek woman", a roundtable of experts on "Balancing professional and family life" which targeted working women and a presentation of best practices from the world of arts, school and media on "Combatting gender violence through experiential activities and new technologies". In 2023, three open seminars will take place at the premises of the Athens Bar Association focusing on women in politics and in the labor market as well as highlighting the role of school on achieving gender equality :

1. Women in Politics: Participation in Governance and Decision-Making
2. The path towards substantive gender equality: the role of Greek school
3. Sexism and sexual harassment in the workplace.

The "Empowerment of Women and Gender Equality" cycle of educational activities addresses critical issues related to women's rights and attracts a diverse range of participants.

More on the educational activities on gender equality:

**1.Video from the 1<sup>st</sup> seminar** 29.03.2023.

<https://youtu.be/bRtnq1a2JmM>

**2.Video from the 2<sup>nd</sup> seminar** 26.03.2023

<https://youtu.be/jYdaryy4LSU>

**3. The GNCHR's past seminars on gender equality:**

[ΕΕΔΑ - Εθνική Επιτροπή για τα Δικαιώματα του Ανθρώπου - Τα βίντεο με τις εκπαιδευτικές δράσεις της ΕΕΔΑ για την ενδυνάμωση των γυναικών και την ουσιαστική ισότητα \(nchr.gr\)](#)

b) According to the statistics of the *Observatory of the General Secretariat for Demography and Family Policy and Gender Equality*, women's empowerment in Greece both in the public and private sector is disappointing.<sup>6</sup> Despite the positive developments in the field of gender equality, among which the important adoption of Law 4604/2019 on *Substantive Gender Equality*, unfortunately, Greece ranks, also in the year 2022, last in the EU on the Gender Equality Index,<sup>7</sup> with the lowest scores in relation to women in power.<sup>8</sup> In a statement on

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<sup>6</sup> See [Observatory of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality 19th e-bulletin - Female Unemployment](#), 2019-04-01.

<sup>7</sup> EIGE, Gender Equality Index, [Comparing scores in 2022 edition](#) & EIGE, Gender Equality Index, Greece, [Greece | Power | 2022 | Gender Equality Index | European Institute for Gender Equality \(europa.eu\)](#)

International Women’s Day (8 March) UN Secretary-General António Guterres pointed out that at the current rate of progress, it will take a stunning 286 years for women to close gender gaps in legal protection and remove discriminatory laws against women. The GNCHR by taking into account the above statement has produced two video spots with the volunteer participation of pupils, girls and boys, from the Tolo Elementary School representing the new generation. The video emphasized the above inequalities and asks the audience whether we can wait it or shall we act now to stop inequalities.

The video of GNCHR was uploaded on social media, broadcasted on public and private television, and is also available on the Greek National Commission's YouTube channel. However, it is worth mentioning that the GNCHR, by deciding to shoot the footage outside Athens, in the periphery of Greece, sought to involve local communities and externalize its actions outside the capital of Greece. The shooting took place at the Tolo Elementary School<sup>9</sup> with the participation of first-grade students and the involvement of educational staff and parents. It can be reasonably argued that the Commission, along with the message it wants to convey through the video, is attempting to engage in dialogue with local communities and educational institutions. The shooting was also an opportunity for the scientific and administrative personnel of the GNCHR to get feedback from the field regarding human rights educational activities and the needs of the educational personnel in terms of support to such projects. The GNCHR regularly visits public and private schools of different grades (elementary, college, lyceum) and conducts specific or general trainings on human rights themes selected in collaboration with the Heads of Schools or professors in charge.

Furthermore, the GNCHR deploras<sup>10</sup> the fact that women are still under-represented in all major political offices (the Cabinet, the Parliament and the Municipal and Regional Councils), irrespective of the applicable 1/3 gender quota referring to the total number of candidates for election and not the elected ones. In the private sector, only 9% of board members of the largest publicly listed companies are women, even though investing in the economic empowerment of women could yield higher development returns in the achievement of sustainable development goals such as gender equality (Goal 5). To this regard, the Greek National Commission has produced a TV spot and a radio spot aiming at encouraging the voting of capable women, in conjunction with the upcoming Greek parliamentary (May 2023) and local (October 2023) elections. These spots, addressed to the general public with voting rights aims at motivating people first to participate in the upcoming elections and second to choose candidates of merit, irrespective of their gender. Combatting gender stereotypes in political participation and election is a key to inclusive representative democracies and better

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<sup>8</sup> EIGE, [Index score for Greece for 2022](#) is 53.4%, whereas the average score in EU countries is 68.6%. Greece’s score in the [domain of power](#) is 28.8%.

<sup>9</sup> Warm thanks to the teacher Nikos Galanis, the parents and teachers of Tolo Elementary School and the School Director Costas Tokatlidis for the excellent cooperation and hospitality. Above all, special thanks to the wonderful children of the First Class of the Elementary School that have been an inspiration to all of us!

<sup>10</sup> EIGE, Gender Equality Index, [Comparing scores in 2022 edition](#) & EIGE, Gender Equality Index, Greece, [Greece | Power | 2022 | Gender Equality Index | European Institute for Gender Equality \(europa.eu\)](#)



decision-making. Additionally, the Greek National Commission will organize a Press Conference with the Greek League for Women's Rights on May 17<sup>th</sup>, three days prior to national elections, with the participation of politicians, journalists and prominent female figures to put more emphasis on equal voting and raise awareness to the fact that we need more female deputies in the Greek Parliament. The last data are disappointing, only 21,6% of the current Parliament are women.

More information on the three TV spots and the radio spot on the GNCHR's campaign on promoting gender equality :

**1. “Judge equally, Vote equally” GNCHR video spot for Enhancing Women's Participation in Politics**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y2FrX90eNEI>

**2. “Vote skills, not stereotypes”, GNCHR radio spot for Enhancing Women's Participation in Politics:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P95tZX5Nozs>

**3. “We can change it!” GNCHR video spots for International Women's Day 2023 (08 March 2023)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EnK3qDRlomc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cY0dAe24ukM>

#### **IV. Concluding remarks**

The best practices adopted by the GNCHR offer tangible illustrations that could be adopted by other NHRIs striving to enhance their human rights reputation and tackle the difficulties specific to the fulfillment of their promotional and educational mandate.

The Recording Mechanism is a best practice established by the GNCHR to address the absence of an official and effective data collection mechanism of informal forced returns in Greece. It promotes respect for the principle of non-refoulement, strengthens accountability for human rights violations, and applies a standardized and transparent recording methodology. The Recording Mechanism is a subsidiary body of the GNCHR's plenary, is technically supported by the UNHCR Office in Greece and is comprised of non-governmental organizations as its members. It has already recorded a significant number of incidents and published its first Interim Report, providing added value as a best practice for addressing human rights violations. Reference can be made to the Recording Mechanism as a model of synergies between international organizations, NHRIs and civil society in effectively addressing human rights challenges, such as the accountability of human rights violations at borders.



The facilitation of the KlimaSeniorinnen’s visit to Greece jointly by the GNCHR and Greenpeace showcases the multiplying effect of synergies between NHRIs and civil society in highlighting the human rights parameter of climate change. By engaging with various stakeholders, including the general public, youth, academia, media and women's organizations, KlimaSeniorinnen’s visit in Greece effectively raised awareness on the adverse impact of climate change on vulnerable social groups, particularly elder women. Finally, the meetings with women's organizations served as a vital step in mobilizing civil society towards collective action in addressing cross-cutting issues such as the climate crisis.

The GNCHR's holistic approach in promoting gender equality and tackling gender stereotypes through monitoring and reporting activities but mostly through educational and awareness activities can be exported, as a best practice in other country settings where NHRIs face similar challenges. NHRIs entrusted with a wide mandate on protection and promotion of human rights are fit to ensure a wide, holistic approach to all fields of life where women face inequality and violence. The GNCHR has opted for educational activities to wider or specific population groups and for spots broadcasted in TV, radio and social media making use of old and new tools in order to engage public dialogue on gender equality. More particularly, by raising public awareness and reducing the significant gap between men and women representation in the Greek parliament, the GNCHR hopes to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals, including gender equality. The GNCHR's message is clear: waiting for change is not an option, and everyone must take action to address gender inequalities.