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GNCHR REPORT

LIVING CONDITIONS IN HOTSPOTS AND ACCOMMODATION SITES FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

November 2016

The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) is the independent advisory body to the Greek State on matters pertaining to human rights protection. It was established by Law 2667/1998 in accordance with the UN Paris Principles. Its members are nominated by thirty two bodies (independent authorities, university departments of law and political science, trade unions, NGOs, political parties and ministries).

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LIVING CONDITIONS IN HOTSPOTS AND ACCOMMODATION SITES FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES¹

Introduction

The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR), which is the independent advisory body to the Greek State on matters pertaining to human rights protection, has the duty, within the powers given to it by its founding Law, to monitor matters pertaining to human rights, attend to public information and develop initiatives in order to raise public awareness, and examine the Greek legislation's adjustment to international law provisions related to human rights protection by expressing its opinion upon this issue to the competent State bodies. Moreover, the National Human Rights Institutions, through the recent Belgrade Declaration (25.11.2015), fully engaged to publicly condemn and oppose the infringement of the rights of migrants and refugees². The GNCHR, as the National Institution for the protection of human rights, acknowledges the special importance of the international protection institution. Therefore, it has already issued a series of relevant Statements and Recommendation Reports and continues to closely monitor the issues related to the provision of international protection in Greece³.

The GNCHR, within the framework of its competence, conducted a series of visits to six accommodation sites in Greece (Elliniko, joint visit with the Greek Ombudsman on 2.6.2016, Elaionas, Elliniko, Schisto and Skaramagkas on 14-15.7.2016, and Kos Island on 13.8.2016). The GNCHR delegation that visited Elliniko on 2.6.2016 included Angeliki Argyropoulou-Chrissochoidou, GNCHR First Vice-President,

¹ Inspection Report: By Spyridon Apergis, Lawyer, GNCHR Member. The text is based on the findings of the GNCHR delegation visits to Elaionas on 14-15.7.2016, Schisto and Skaramagkas on 2.6.2016 and Kos Island on 13.8.2016.

² Ombudsman/National Human Rights Institutions Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Refugees and Migrants, «5. Condemn and oppose publicly the violation of migrants' or refugees' rights and encourage the spirit of tolerance and compassion for refugees and migrants, including ensuring their protection in reception centres and other accommodation facilities.» http://www.nchr.gr/images/pdf/nea_epikairothta/belgrade_declaration_en.pdf

³ See GNCHR Statement on the significant dimensions of the refugee/migrant issue in Greece, 16.3.2016, http://www.nchr.gr/images/pdf/nea_epikairothta/prosfigiki_krisi.pdf, GNCHR Public Statement on the amendment related to the composition of the Independent Commissions for Refugees, 17.6.2016, http://www.nchr.gr/images/pdf/apofaseis/prosfuges_metanastes/Dimosia%20dilwsi%20EEDA.pdf, Report about the EU-Turkey Agreement (18.3.2016) pertaining to the refugee/migrant issue under Law 4375/2016, 25.4.2016, http://www.nchr.gr/images/pdf/EKTHESI_PROSFYGIKO.pdf

Spyridon Apergis, lawyer and GNCHR member and Aikaterini Tsampi, GNCHR Legal Officer. The GNCHR delegation that visited Elaionas and Elliniko on 14.7.2017 included the following: Angeliki Argyropoulou-Chrissochoidou, GNCHR First Vice-President, Maria Gavouneli, Assistant Professor of the University of Athens Faculty of Law, Chair of the GNCHR Sub-Commission for International Communication and Co-operation, Katerina Kalogera, GNCHR member and President of the Amnesty International Greek Section, Anna-Eirini Baka, GNCHR Legal Officer. The GNCHR delegation was accompanied by Julie Lejeune, Legal Policy Officer, ENNHRI Permanent Secretariat, as well as by Ina Vandenberghe, European Migration Network Myria (EMN) representative. The GNCHR delegation that visited Schisto and Skaramagkas on 15.7.2016 included Maria Gavouneli, Assistant Professor of the University of Athens Faculty of Law, Chair of the GNCHR Sub-Commission for International Communication and Co-operation, Fivos Iatrellis, GNCHR member and Honorary State Legal Adviser, Spyridon Apergis, lawyer and GNCHR member and Aikaterini Tsampi, GNCHR Legal Officer. The GNCHR delegation was accompanied by Julie Lejeune, Legal Policy Officer, ENNHRI Permanent Secretariat as well as by Ina Vandenberghe, European Migration Network Myria (EMN) representative. Georgios Stavropoulos, GNCHR President and Honorary Vice-President of the Council of State, visited the accommodation site of Kos Island on 13.8.2016.

The findings of these visits were presented and discussed on the 24th October 2016 at the Athens Bar Association, during an event about ‘The living conditions in the accommodations sites for refugees and migrants: difficulties and prospects.’ Georgios Stavropoulos, GNCHR President and Honorary Vice-President of the Council of State, opened the event expressing his wish for an honest debate to take place that would lead to specific conclusions concerning the living conditions of the refugees in the accommodation sites. He pointed out that Greece nowadays is facing enormous challenges because of its geographic position. The Greek State appeared unprepared to face this new reality, as G. Stavropoulos highlighted, and the big gaps were filled by the UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Nevertheless, he continued, the GNCHR took action through announcements, draft laws observations and statements, recommending an overall change in both Greece

and EU's migration policy with a view to applying the international law principles on the migration issue. The GNCHR President also mentioned that bodies regarding the first instance examination of asylum claims and the Appeals Committees need to be effectively staffed. Meanwhile, he underlined that it is of great importance for these bodies to function without political interference. The President ended his opening speech remarking that, although it was not possible for the GNCHR to visit all accommodation sites across the country, the testimonies gathered were extremely useful for drawing conclusions.

Adriana C.J. Van Dooijeweert, President of the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights and Co-chair (along with Ms. Gavouneli) of the ENNHRI Asylum and Migration Working Group, addressed the meeting with wishes for the success of the endeavour. Then, the event was divided into two parts. In Part I, the testimonies gathered during the GNCHR delegation visits to accommodation sites, were presented. Angeliki Argyropoulou-Chrissochoidou, GNCHR First Vice-President, talked about the Elliniko I accommodation site. Spyros Apergis, GNCHR member, Lawyer, shared his impressions of the Elliniko II accommodation site, whereas Katerina Kalogera, GNCHR member and President of the Amnesty International Greek Section, talked about the Elaionas I accommodation site. Fivos Iatrellis, GNCHR member and Honorary State Legal Adviser, referred to his experience from the Schisto accommodation site, while Maria Gavouneli, Chair of the GNCHR Sub-Commission for International Communication and Co-operation, Assistant Professor of the University of Athens, Faculty of Law, talked about the accommodation site of Skaramagkas. Georgios Stavropoulos, GNCHR President, talked about the current situation in the accommodation site of Kos Island.

In Part II, a round-table discussion coordinated by the GNCHR President took place, including the following debaters: Giorgos Kaminis, Mayor of Athens, Giorgos Moschos, Deputy Ombudsman for Children's Rights and Ann Maymann, UNHCR Assistant Representative in Greece. The event closed with Angeliki Argyropoulou-Chrissochoidou, GNCHR First Vice-President, presenting the main conclusions.

The following information refers to the situation of the sites during the GNCHR visits. Unfortunately, economic reasons made it impossible for the GNCHR to

conduct systematic visits to the Eastern Aegean Islands and Northern Greece. However, the contribution of the GNCHR President, Georgios Stavropoulos, as far as the hotspot of Kos Island is concerned, as well as that of Evangelia Palaiologou, Dr. of Criminology and Chair of the Association of Greek judges and prosecutors for the democracy and freedoms, who shared her impressions of the hotspot in Chios Island, are worth mentioning. This report mainly contains the presentation of the findings of the GNCHR visits as well as suggested measures for addressing the urgent and mid-term needs related to receiving and hosting refugees in Greece. It is noted that the GNCHR was not informed about the establishment plan and the institutional framework related to the operation of the visited accommodation sites.

Housing

The accommodation sites' housing conditions differ significantly, therefore inequalities are consolidated. As a general remark, the GNCHR ascertained that housing conditions in the visited accommodation sites for refugees and migrants are problematic or even totally inadequate. Relatively decent housing conditions were to be found only in the site of Elaionas.

Namely: The area of **Elaionas** consists of three different accommodation sites, which dispose prefabricated houses with beds, bathroom and a small kitchen with access to water, drainage and electricity facilities. These sites host around 2,500 people, mainly vulnerable groups, families, children and persons with disabilities. Some complaints are expressed by refugees/migrants/asylum seekers concerning the food quality (for example there is lack of red meat, there is fruit supply but no vegetable supply). During the visit at Elaionas the competent representative of the Ministry of Interior informed the GNCHR delegation that there are around 700 minors, out of which the unaccompanied minors are 30-50. The countries of origin of the refugees/migrants/asylum seekers in Elaionas (in descending order) are Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan and Congo. The NGOs operating in this field are, among others, Metadrasi, SOS Children's Villages, IRC and Doctors Without Borders. All refugees/migrants/asylum seekers reside in prefabricated houses/containers with air-condition and heater.

The staff provided by the Ministry of Interior is 30-50 people (First Slot). Doctors serving the open accommodation site are two in the morning from KEELPNO (Hellenic Center for Disease Control and Prevention HCDCP), while in the evening there is enhanced support from Doctors Without Borders. During the encounter of the GNCHR delegation with the person in charge of the open accommodation site, appointed by the UNHCR, the GNCHR was informed that the site began to operate on the 16th of August 2015 and that it has developed in three sites (Elaionas I, II and III). It is an open site that closes at 10:00 pm. Pre-registration has been completed for everyone, while some family reunifications are still expected. Refugees, migrants and asylum seekers arrived from the port of Piraeus in Elaionas III, which compared to Elaionas I and II has inadequate infrastructures, therefore it is under military supervision. It is noted that the UNHCR has access to this site.

In general, Elaionas is considered to be the 'best' open accommodation site and this is why people who are transferred there belong mostly to vulnerable groups. There have been some limited incidents of domestic violence and only one (1) incident of racial violence between an Afghan and a Syrian. Generally, it is a quiet site. Elaionas III, which hosts 800 people, causes concern, however NGOs and UNHCR have access to this area.

The area of **Schisto** is a former military base. At the beginning of its operation as an accommodation site for refugees/migrants it was intended to be a site of temporary residence (transit). The site is lit up at night and enclosed by blue plastic protective material so as not to be visible externally.

The 1,670 people accommodated in Schisto, are Afghan-Iranians in their majority. Among them, there are 250 families and 9/10 mothers alone with children. They reside in tents, exposed to all weather conditions (heat, cold, rain, strong wind), while it seems that no measures have been taken to prevent floods or shade the tents. There are buildings that house NGOs. The GNCHR delegation was informed that there are 25 people working in the site during the morning and evening until 10 p.m. The government has promised that until the 15th of December 2016 the tents at the site of Schisto, where around 800 people still reside, will have been replaced by

prefabricated structures, while an amount of money will be given to people to buy rubber boots⁴.

At the area of **Elliniko** there are three accommodation sites: the airport's former area of arrivals, where aliens reside in tents inside the sheltered area, the Hockey and the Baseball pitch, where people reside in tents exposed to all weather conditions (heat, cold, rain, strong wind). Some improvised, totally inadequate flood protection works were found but there were no works for shading the tents.

In the area of **Skaramagkas** there are hundreds of prefabricated houses with beds, a toilet and a shower and a small kitchen with access to water, drainage and electricity facilities (containers). A site of so many prefabricated houses is hard to be monitored and both logistics and offer of adequate services are in fact inadequate and problematic. The majority of people accommodated in Skaramagkas are Syrians. Through the provision of the food aid card on a monthly basis, data controls are also conducted.

The refugees – migrants in **Kos Island** (around 800 as the GNCHR was told during the inspection visit) reside in prefabricated air-conditioned houses, , according to the statement of the the Ministry of Interior representative. Each residence hosts 15 to 20 persons, while it is estimated that it is appropriate for no more than 6-8 persons. It was also mentioned that each residence has running water and it offers the possibility for a person to have a rudimentary shower.

Food, sanitation and places of worship

The findings of the visits vary in this sector as well. The GNCHR generally observed that food is usually provided by the State's military forces and is not always of good quality, whereas sanitation and other services are mostly provided by NGOs in cooperation with the Administration. The GNCHR delegation was informed that services of the Ministry of Interior and those of the Reception and Identification Service, as provided by Law 4375/2016, are absent.

⁴ See the statements of Gianni Mouzalas, Minister of Migration Policy, in the Hellenic Parliament on the occasion of a question addressed to him on behalf of Diamanto Manoulakou, KKE (Communist Party of Greece) member of the Parliament, republication in <http://samiaki.tv/xiliades-metanastes-paramenoy-nsta-nhsia-toy-aigaioy/04/11/2016>

The accommodated refugees, migrants and asylum seekers in **Elaionas** site have expressed their complaints about the food quality (for example there is lack of red meat and vegetables but not of fruit).

At the site of **Schisto**, the facilities of the former military base are used for services provision. The facilities include areas for children, women and men activities, two places of worship, a playground, specific areas with electrical outlets to charge devices, warehouses, meal distribution areas, areas for the provision of services by NGOs. However, the GNCHR noticed that there are no sufficient sanitation facilities for the aliens (toilets, showers) and it was informed that there is no provision for the repair or maintenance of the existent facilities, other than the relative services provided by an NGO. At the sites of Schisto and Elliniko, there are very few toilets and sanitation areas for the residents. At the site of Elliniko there are no laundry facilities. At the site of Schisto there are special areas for device charging.

At the site of **Skaramagkas** the presence of NGOs is significant. Meals are distributed 3 times a day in a specific area of the site in 4 kiosks (of which 2 serve women and the other 2 men). Meals are provided by private catering services. It was mentioned that the quality of the food provided is disproportionate to its price. During its visit, the GNCHR delegation observed that a considerable quantity of pre-packaged food portions had been dropped on the ground around the delivery kiosks. Next to this area there are also dustbins, which are insufficient considering the amount of waste. As a result there are strong unpleasant odours. In total there are eight people of the Hellenic Navy in the service of the site, from 08.00 am to 06.00 pm. There were conflicts between people of different religious doctrines related to the separation of the worship places. Hence, the creation of the first outdoor worship place was followed by the disposal of a second place.

Safety Issues

As a general remark, the situation in the accommodation sites is precarious. Namely, the available patrol cars for each one of the accommodation sites are very few (there are usually 1-2 police officers per eight-hour shift). As a result, serious safety issues arise, especially in overcrowded accommodation sites like the site of **Skaramagkas**, where there are serious safety issues and repeated incidents of infringing conduct. The

GNCHR was informed that drug and arms trafficking takes place inside the area of the site, while incidents of violence among the accommodated take place daily. The GNCHR delegation actually witnessed one of those. The GNCHR delegation was also informed that some of the residents in Skaramagkas break into the warehouses where basic necessities are gathered. For this purpose they use mostly minors, who are able to easily break in through windows, despite the fact that guardrails have been placed. It was also indicated to the GNCHR delegation an area inside the site, where illicit trade of stolen items seems to take place. It was mentioned that many of the accommodated abandon the site without any previous notification and then grant or sublet their housing space to other refugees/migrants. The tasks with regard to the site's safety and the terms of the Hellenic Police intervention are not clear. It was pointed out that, even in cases where police intervention is required, the Hellenic Police does not always arrive on time.

At the site of **Elaionas** there have been some limited incidents of domestic violence and only one (1) incident of racial violence between an Afghan and a Syrian. As the competent UNHCR employee noted, no further incidents of violence and infringement have been observed. The situation at Schisto is similar.

Exit and entry at the accommodation sites visited by the GNCHR are free and the residents just need to demonstrate the relevant documents. The Hellenic Police is present on a 24-hour basis (there are usually 1-2 police cars) but it does not intervene in the sites.

Health issues

As a general remark, state medical care in accommodation sites is rather inadequate, as there is usually one military doctor (for hundreds or thousands of people) and no paramedical personnel. Various NGOs, however, provide a wide range of medical treatment, partially covering the serious lack of the state's presence in accommodation sites.

At the site of **Elliniko** medical services are provided by a doctor and a nurse. Whenever people cannot be treated on the spot, they are transferred to the nearest hospitals by an ambulance of the National Centre of Emergency Care (EKAB). Among other services, NGOs also provide psychological support, while there is a

special area where useful information is provided by the UNHCR and NGOs. At the site of **Skaramagkas** medical services are also provided by the Navy. There is a constant presence of a doctor and two nurses at the site, so they can also treat urgent medical cases. Red Cross undertakes vaccination and provides medical services. At the site of **Elaionas**, there are two HCDCP (Hellenic Center for Disease Control and Prevention) doctors that serve the open accommodation site in the morning, while in the evening there is additional support from the Doctors Without Borders.

Education

During the visits, the GNCHR noticed that refugees had developed improvised solutions related to the education of the minors, since the presence and activity of the state in this field is very limited. However, even in this case, the GNCHR noticed that some of the NGOs entertained children with games or other activities in the morning.

Especially in **Skaramagkas**, there are two prefabricated facilities with desks and boards that are used as classrooms. Arab, English and Math classes take place. The Ministry of Education has sent teachers under the Open School Project.

There are around 700 minors hosted in **Elaionas**, from which 30-50 are unaccompanied. There is a school operating in the site (in a prefabricated house/container) where children are taught Arab, Farsi, Greek and English. The NGO 'SOS Children's Villages' is responsible for the management and organisation of the classes. In response to a question put by Ms Baka, GNCHR Legal Officer, as to whether the school functioned properly, the NGO's staff mentioned that the space provided was inadequate and there was a need of an extra prefabricated house/container.

At **Schisto**, organised education (English-Greek) is provided by Army staff. Representatives of the Ministry of Education had visited Schisto a month before the GNCHR delegation, to evaluate the educational needs. In Kos Island, there is no space for the education of alien minors and education is not provided.

Access to legal information/international protection

As a general remark, access to legal assistance (legal information about the asylum, special services for women and children protection) is also almost exclusively

provided by NGOs on a daily basis, while the UNHCR is constantly present at all accommodation sites visited by the GNCHR. However, the Asylum Service in cooperation with the UNHCR and the European Asylum Support Office, during summer, went through the pre-registration process of those accommodated in sites and other hosting areas of the country.

The person in charge of the open accommodation site in **Elaionas** stated that there is no provision of legal assistance to refugees, migrants and asylum seekers from NGOs.

At the site of **Skaramagkas** the pre-registration process was carried out in specifically designed facilities with controlled entry/exit. For this purpose, people residing in open facilities (such as City Plaza) were transferred there. During the GNCHR visit to Skaramagkas, it was mentioned that 25,000 people had been registered in total, while the initial expectations reached almost twice this number. Competent authorities distribute in advance wristbands to those interested in pre-registration and a registration date is set for each site. Thus, they enter the controlled and specifically designed pre-registration area (screening room, reception room, chemical toilets, blue dots, facilities/offices to conduct the procedure, exit control), receive information about their rights and proceed to registration. There was an incident with a family that did not have a wristband and was not allowed entry by the staff at the gate.

Vulnerable groups

Inside the site of **Skaramagkas** the GNCHR did not find any of the UNHCR special facilities, known as Blue Dots, aimed to offer children activities and services to pregnant women and nursing mothers. Such facilities were found only in the controlled entry points of the pre-registration area. A Dutch NGO had been responsible for children's activities in the site, but it finally abandoned the project due to tensions generated in the outdoor area allocated to it for its operation.

The GNCHR was informed that in many cases there are many women and children who live outside the site area. There are 18 pregnant women and 9 newborn children hosted in **Schisto**. The GNCHR was told that there are no residents with disabilities in the area of the site, there are, however, some people with mobility problems. As far as

children's activities and services to pregnant women and nursing mothers are concerned, there are special UNHCR facilities, known as Blue Dots.

The situation in the Eastern Aegean islands⁵

The hotspot in the island of Kos is situated in an old camp. The area has been diligently fenced and is guarded by police force. The area, in which the hotspot operates, is located in the mountainous part of the island and its facilities are not visible or easily accessible. During the night the facilities are illuminated by big spotlights. There is a police control in the entrance and in the exit of the camp. However, the inhabitants can enter and leave the camp freely. The responsible official of the Ministry of Interior refused to grant a meeting of the President of the NCHR with the residents (migrants – refugees), even in the facilities where they live, claiming that during such a meeting, acts of aggression could probably break out.

The residents (migrants – refugees), approximately 800 in number, reside in prefabricated accommodation facilities, with air conditioning, as the responsible official of the Ministry of Interior stated. Each accommodation hosts 15 to 20 people, although it is considered that each accommodation can serve no more than 6-8 people. The minors are residing at an initial stage, separately from the other residents; however, they communicate with them freely. A space destined to provide education to foreign minors does not exist and education of any kind is not provided.

Moreover, it is known that in each facility there is running water and a possibility to take a quick shower is provided, while the army forces in Kos have undertaken the responsibility of feeding through a catering private company. It was reported that the guests, as they are not used to Western-type meals, often refuse to consume food. In addition, problems with the sewerage are detected, as the soil, which is flooded does not absorb the wastes and this constitutes a threat to the health of all the people living in this area.

⁵ Several of the information concerning the islands of the eastern Aegean are granted by an article of a NCHR member, Spyros Apergis, due to be published in the next issue of the Law and Aliens Inspection.

Evaggelia Palaiologou, President of the Association of Greek Judges and Public Prosecutors for the Democracy and the Liberties, who dramatically conveyed her impressions regarding the hotspot in Chios, reported that when she visited the accommodation center of Vial old factory in Chios on 10.06.2016, she saw an area double fenced and people in bars. After she has entered with a police convoy the site, with the containers and the Asylum Services, she found that there was a tension among the aliens and then she witnessed violent incidents. These incidents were caused, according to her testimony, because of the despair of the people who got a negative answer to their asylum applications. Under these circumstances, many aliens were trying to hurt themselves (for example they banged their heads against the wall, pulled to root out their hair, tried to cut their veins). They were violent also with the young children that they accompanied, by throwing them to the concrete ground and kicking them with force. Although the police intervention was immediate, the physical and mental suffering of these people is remarkable.

Conclusions and recommendations of the NCHR

In conclusion, NCHR estimates that there is a *de facto* violation of the rights of the applicants for international protection and refugees, regarding their massive and indiscriminate detention on the islands of the eastern Aegean, the timely and effective access to both international protection and to decent accommodation, health and education services, while the right to challenge the detention and the access of the applicants for international protection to the asylum/international protection procedures (for instance, they are not entitled to be present in person before the independent Appeals Committees⁶) is not respected, in accordance to the law. At the same time, the continuous incidents mainly in accommodation centers of the eastern Aegean islands and the often uncontrollable, violent incidents taking place in mainland's centers are aggravating the racism and xenophobia problem among parts of the Greek population that will put in danger the entire reception and accommodation procedure of refugees in Greece.

It is worth mentioning that during the presentation that NCHR held in the Athens Bar Association on October 24, 2016 on 'Living conditions in the refugee and migrant

⁶ [Public statement of the NCHR on the amendment, which changes the composition of the Independent Appeals Committees](#), 06.17.2016.

accommodation centers: problems and prospects", in particular with regard to the discussion of the round table, the issue of "next day," namely the issue of integration of migrants and refugees into the Greek society, was raised in an impressive way. More precisely, Giorgos Kaminis, Mayor of Athens, in his speech referred to the aid provided by the Municipality of Athens, and the necessity of sharing the burden of immigration and refugee issue within the municipality, by relocating refugees, migrants and asylum seekers in other Greek cities. In the same direction was Mrs Ann Maymann intervention Assistant Representative of UNHCR in Greece, who pointed out the uneven distribution of refugees and migrants between the islands and the mainland and hence the need for relocation of migrant and refugee population from the Aegean islands to mainland.

Giorgos Kaminis stressed that the problem is actually manageable, while the rise of the extreme right in Greece requires new actions. It is important that refugee and migrant accommodation areas be smaller and integrated into the urban fabric (for example 1 migrant / refugee per 10 people), with particular emphasis on the concept of "neighborhood" and how this can serve as an integration focal point.

Giorgos Moschos, Deputy Ombudsman for the Rights of the Child welcomed the initiatives of the Municipality of Athens and mentioned the need for solidarity to address the immigration-refugee issue with emphasis to the protection of childhood. He stressed that we need to reduce the disparities observed in the facilities and accommodation centers, that the Greek State needs to undertake actions in order to effectively address racist incidents in schools. He referred extensively to the problem of unaccompanied minors, the guardianship issues and delays in their relocation. With regard to that matter, the representative of the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA) Pericles Tziaras intervened and assured that the issue of guardianship of unaccompanied minors has progressed and will soon be implemented with funding from the AMIF.

NCHR Recommendations to the Greek State

- 1) In view of the foregoing, the NCHR recommends to review the adoption and implementation of the Joint Statement of the European Union (EU) –Turkey in March 18th, 2016 in the direction of its replacement by a comprehensive

agreement with the EU for the reception and relocation of refugees in the member states according to the principle of proportionality and to apply the highest international standards for the international refugee protection, to apply the principle of non-refoulement to States that do not provide an international protection, according to the Geneva Convention and the fair examination of their applications for international protection.

- 2) To immediately fill the posts of the services of the Ministry of Migration Policy, according to the law 4375/2016 for a more effective coordination of services and of the related operational needs during the reception and the accommodation of the refugees. It is also necessary to create an institutionally registered, national coordinating body in cooperation with the UNHCR and Greek and international NGOs in order to plan and coordinate the reception and accommodation needs of the refugees more effectively.
- 3) To immediately provide the Identification and Reception Service with sufficient staff and resources in order for the Service to undertake as soon as possible, the full command and the logistics of all operating centers, with a view to the withdrawal of the armed forces from the administration of these centers, as provided in law 4375/2016, which remains inapplicable as regards the staffing and the operation of this Service. To issue as soon as possible, the necessary statutes for the establishment and operation of all Accommodation Centers.
- 4) The creation of medial capacity accommodation centers outside the residential areas is required, while the tents (where applicable) should be replaced by closed living areas for the winter. The operation of very large accommodation centers (for example Skaramagkas) should be terminated, given that their administration and operation is extremely difficult or even impossible, while the refugees should be relocated to smaller accommodation centers. Unofficial accommodation structures that are not meeting the minimum decent living conditions (for example Elliniko, Softex) should also be dismantled immediately and refugees should be transferred to other places that satisfy these conditions.

- 5) The strengthening of the apartment rental program, especially for the vulnerable groups of refugees and for those living in accommodation centers with moderate or poor living conditions is required and constitutes the preferred housing solution in cooperation with the UNHCR in order to progressively install all refugees.
- 6) The staffing of the accommodation centers with medical and paramedical staff as well as with logistics personnel (interpreters, cultural mediators, plumbers, electricians, cleaning and supporting the proper functioning of the facilities staff). At the same time, the presence of police forces is required in order to ensure the security of the facilities.
- 7) To ensure the access of refugees to adequate legal information and free legal assistance at both degrees of asylum and to asylum procedures. To allow those preregistered, to work legitimately following a relevant change of the existing institutional framework, since the period between the pre registration and the full registration lasts usually several months.
- 8) To end the use of the reception and accommodation centers on the islands of the Eastern Aegean as detention centers for refugees and migrants and to ease the congestion of the eastern Aegean islands by relocating refugees and migrants to mainland. To implement the alternative measures to detention, as provided in the EU's legislation, and to ensure the decent reception and accommodation of refugees and migrants in those centers.
- 9) To safeguard the rights of vulnerable groups of refugees in Greece by providing integrated services system in order to meet, at an initial stage, their most urgent needs (registration, decent living in accommodation centers and guardianship for unaccompanied minors, care for pregnant women and women after childbirth, medical care and psychological care for refugees with serious health problems, the disabled and the victims of torture and sexual or other violence or abuse).
- 10) To reinforce in staffing and resources, the Asylum Service and Appeals Committees in order to achieve a faster and more efficient processing of

international protection applications and to train the staff of these services adequately aiming at meeting the highest international standards for asylum procedures, in accordance with national, European and international law on asylum and the international protection of refugees.

NCHR Recommendations to the European and International Institutions

- 1) To review the adoption and implementation of the Joint Statement of the European Union (EU) –Turkey in March 18th, 2016 with a view to its replacement by a comprehensive agreement with the EU for the reception and relocation of refugees in the member states, according to the principle of proportionality and to apply the highest international standards for the international refugee protection, to apply the principle of non-refoulement to States that do not provide an international protection according to the Geneva Convention and to provide a fair review of their application for international protection. To ensure in every way that all the irregular aliens have equal access to asylum procedures and that their international obligations will be respected regarding the right to health protection, education and family reunification of refugees and of applicants for international protection.
- 2) To speed up and broaden the relocation of refugees from Greece to the European Union Member States within the context of an equitable numerical distribution among the EU Member States, as required by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Conventions.
- 3) To immediately provide with staff and resources the reception services, accommodation and asylum in Greece, by increasing, where appropriate, the relevant funds and taking all relevant measures for a rapid and more efficient transportation of personnel and the direction of the funds to the competent Greek authorities, the UNHCR and the NGOs that support these services in Greece.
- 4) To modify as soon as possible the immigration policy of the EU and in particular the Dublin system, which has been shown to be inconsistent with the current

needs and to be incompatible with the principles of human rights, solidarity and fair burden-sharing between EU Member States.

- 5) To officially accept and implement the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights regarding the obligation to save aliens attempting to enter by sea the EU Member States and the obligation to guarantee access to a fair and efficient examination of their claims, including the right to apply for international protection.