Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to speak on behalf of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Hungary's oldest and largest human rights watchdog organisation. We provide legal assistance, monitor human rights violations and advocate before domestic and international bodies. We have participated in every UPR cycle. For this review, we submitted reports on the rule of law, migrants' rights and criminal justice, the latter two jointly with partner organisations.

The drafting of Hungary's national report did not involve meaningful consultation: civil society was given only one and a half working days to comment. The final report, largely based on one prepared by the previous government, did not address our concerns and contains factual inaccuracies and omissions on almost every issue.

I will address three issues: institutional protection of human rights, access to asylum, and detention and ill-treatment.

First, institutional protection.

Our submission was filed on 10 April, two days before Hungary's general election. It documented that none of the 19 relevant recommendations supported during the previous review had been fully implemented.

The change of government has since brought important progress. Hostile government rhetoric targeting independent civil society has ceased. The legislation establishing the Sovereignty Protection Office was repealed, and the Office was abolished in July. The proposal enabling the blacklisting and financial restriction of civil society organisations is no longer pending.

These are significant first steps. However, dismantling restrictive measures is not the same as restoring effective checks and balances. Hungary's national human rights institution remains downgraded to B status, with concerns about its appointment, independence and performance unresolved. Structural safeguards concerning constitutional review, judicial independence, public consultation and the implementation of international judgments still require reform.

We encourage states to recommend that Hungary:

- adopt, in consultation with civil society, a comprehensive programme to restore checks and balances and remedy systemic rule-of-law deficiencies; and
- reform the appointment and operation of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights in line with the Paris Principles.

Second, access to asylum.

Hungary did not implement the two recommendations it supported concerning discrimination against refugees and migrants.

Asylum-seekers must first submit a declaration of intent at a Hungarian embassy in Belgrade or Kyiv before applying for protection in Hungary. Although the Court of Justice of the European Union found this system unlawful, it remains in force.

In 2025, Hungary registered only 109 asylum applications. Since collective expulsions were legalised in 2016, authorities have carried out over 400,000 push-backs, according to official police data. These removals take place without an individual procedure, access to asylum or an assessment of the risk of refoulement, and are often accompanied by indiscriminate violence.

We encourage states to recommend that Hungary:

- abolish the embassy-based system and ensure effective access to asylum on its territory and at its borders; and
- immediately end collective expulsions and guarantee individual assessment of protection needs and the risk of refoulement.

Third, detention and ill-treatment.

In December 2025, almost 19,750 people were detained in facilities with an official capacity of approximately 18,650. Twenty of Hungary's thirty prisons were operating above capacity, while alternatives to detention remained underused.

Accountability for ill-treatment is exceptionally weak. Between 2019 and 2024, indictments were brought in only 3.6 to 8 per cent of decided cases concerning alleged ill-treatment in official proceedings. Detainees frequently lack confidential access to independent medical examinations. Since 2017, specialised civil society organisations have had no access to prisons for monitoring.

We encourage states to recommend that Hungary:

- adopt a comprehensive strategy to reduce overcrowding through greater use of non-custodial measures; and
- ensure independent investigations and medical examinations in ill-treatment cases, and restore independent civil society monitoring of detention.

The change of government presents a genuine opportunity to rebuild human rights protection in Hungary. This requires not only repealing restrictive measures, but restoring independent institutions, effective oversight and access to remedies.

Thank you.