



*Latvijas Republikas pastāvīgā pārstāvniecība ANO Ženēvā
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Latvia to the United
Nations Office in Geneva*

UN-G-753

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Latvia to the United Nations Office in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and has the honour to forward the letter by His Excellency Ambassador Ivars Pundurs, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Latvia, in reply to the Joint Communication from Special Procedures Nr. OL LVA 1/2025 of 7 November 2025.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Latvia avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 14 January 2026



A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of stylized initials and a long horizontal stroke.

**Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
Geneva**

Ms Reem Alsalem
Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences
UN Human Rights Office

Ms Claudia Flores
Chair-Rapporteur
UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls

Ref.: OL LVA 1/2025

Dear Ms Reem Alsalem
Dear Ms Claudia Flores

In response to the letter, dated 7 November 2025, with the enclosed joint communication sent by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, regarding the observations concerning the decision of the Parliament of Latvia (Saeima) on 31 October 2025 to withdraw from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the consequent refusal by the President of the Republic of Latvia to sign the bill on 3 November 2025, the Republic of Latvia would like to provide the following information in response to the questions raised.

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the description of events and observations made in the present letter

With reference to the information provided in your letter, it should be noted that certain details require clarification, and corrections are necessary to ensure the accuracy of the description of events and observations contained therein.

Latvia signed the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (hereinafter - the Convention) on 18 May 2016.

The Constitutional Court of Latvia in its judgment of 4 June 2021 (published on 7 October 2021 on the Official Publisher of the Republic of Latvia) concerning the constitutional complaint introduced by 21 Members of Saeima found that all obligations imposed on the Member States by the Convention apply solely within the scope of the Convention in accordance with its object and purpose. The Constitutional Court also held that Article 4(3) of the Convention is compatible with Article 91 (prohibition of discrimination) of the Latvian Constitution.

On 30 November 2023, the Saeima ratified the Convention, and the Convention entered into force in Latvia on 1 May 2024.

Together with its instrument of ratification Latvia made a declaration, deposited on 10 January 2024, according to which, Latvia “will apply the Convention in accordance with the values, principles and norms within the limits determined by the Constitution [...], in particular with regard to the protection of human rights, equality of women and men, and the protection and support of marriage, the family, the rights of

parents and rights of the child. [...] the term “gender” included in the Convention shall not be considered to be relating to an obligation to introduce any other understanding of sex (women and men) in the legal and educational system of the Republic of Latvia and shall not impose an obligation to interpret the norms and values established in the Constitution [...]”.

At the end of 2024 and beginning of 2025, seven states submitted objections to Latvia’s interpretative declaration under the 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties. Objections raised by those states were that, in their view, the declaration aimed at limiting the application of the Convention and accordingly constituted an impermissible reservation.

The ratification of the Convention in 2023 has enabled Latvia to make significant and rapid progress in combating violence against women and domestic violence.

On 19 December 2024, the Government of Latvia approved the *Plan for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence 2024-2029*. This plan is a key policy instrument for the implementation of the provisions of the Convention; the plan will remain valid and enforceable irrespective of any ongoing procedures concerning any potential withdrawal from the Convention.

On 25 September 2025, the Saeima voted to forward the draft law no. 1058/Lp14, “On the Withdrawal from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence” (hereinafter - the withdrawal law) for review to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Saeima. The initiative passed with 55 votes in favour and 33 against.

On 7 October 2025, the Government of Latvia, having heard the informative report submitted by the Ministry of Welfare as well as information from other line ministries (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Health, and others) on the progress of the implementation of the Convention in Latvia, adopted a decision not to support the withdrawal of Latvia from the Convention.

On 17 October 2025, the Minister of Justice of Latvia requested an urgent opinion from the European Commission for Democracy through Law of the Council of Europe (the Venice Commission) on the draft withdrawal law. The opinion of the Venice Commission was adopted at its 145th Plenary Session (12-13 December 2025, Venice) and later published on its official webpage.

On 23 October 2025, the Saeima adopted the draft withdrawal law in its first reading. The draft law was passed in its first reading with the support of 52 votes of the Members of the Saeima.

On 30 October 2025, after a 12–14-hour marathon debate in which all proposed amendments were rejected, the Saeima adopted the draft withdrawal law in its final reading by 56 votes in favour, 32 against and 2 abstaining.

In response, more than 65 000 people digitally signed the appeal to the President of Latvia urging him not to sign the withdrawal law on the *ManaBalsss.lv* (*My voice*)

platform¹, making it the most popular initiative in the platform's history. The initiative was published on 31 October 2025 and gathered 61 000 signatures in just a few days, representing the fastest result in the history of the platform².

On 31 October 2025, the President of Latvia announced that he would carefully assess the withdrawal law, adopted by the Saeima in two readings, based on national and legal considerations.³

On 3 November 2025, the President of Latvia, acting under Article 71 of the Constitution of Latvia⁴, submitted a reasoned request to the Speaker of the Saeima Ms Daiga Mieriņa to reconsider the withdrawal law.

The request emphasised that “[t]he ratification and denunciation of the Convention within one term of the Saeima sends a contradictory message to both the Latvian society and Latvia’s international allies about the country’s readiness to fulfil its international obligations in good faith. Such uncertainty and unpredictability of the state’s actions are not appropriate in the European legal space”.

The President also noted that “[i]t should be seriously assessed whether such action is compatible with the principle of sincere cooperation as enshrined in the Treaty on European Union and the obligation of the European Union Member States to assist each other in carrying out tasks to achieve the objectives of the European Union.” However, the letter does not explicitly state that a withdrawal from the Convention would conflict with the principle of loyal cooperation.

At the same time, between 3 and 7 November 2025 a GREVIO delegation visited Latvia to carry out its baseline evaluation. This visit constitutes one of the most important steps in evaluating and documenting Latvia’s progress in combating violence against women and domestic violence under the Convention.

On 15 December 2025, the Opinion of the Venice Commission was published. In its conclusions, the Venice Commission emphasised that human rights protection in Council of Europe member States relied on layered international commitments and monitoring mechanisms. It underlined that GREVIO (the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence) remained the only independent body responsible for overseeing compliance with binding standards on the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence. The Venice Commission continued by stating that while national laws may strengthen protection at the domestic level, they cannot replace the accountability, consistency, and oversight ensured by an international convention, which helps prevent gaps in

¹ Homepage of the initiative: <https://manabalss.lv/i/3788>

² The award-winning digital democracy platform *ManaBalss.lv* (*My voice*), which has served as an important tool for civic participation in policy-making in Latvia for 14 years.

³ [Comment by the President of Latvia following the Saeima’s adoption of the law "On Withdrawal from the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence" | Valsts prezidenta kanceleja](#)

⁴ Art.71 of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia: “Within ten days of the adoption of a law by the Saeima, the President, by means of a written and reasoned request to the Chairperson of the Saeima, may require that a law be reconsidered. If the Saeima does not amend the law, the President then may not raise objections a second time.”

implementation. It further stated that comparing the European Union Directive with the Convention cannot constitute a valid justification for withdrawal, as the EU Directive was based on the Convention and was itself subject to GREVIO monitoring. Having observed the above, the Venice Commission concluded that Latvia should continue to rely on GREVIO's expertise for as long as it remains a State Party to the Convention.

The discussion on denunciation of the Convention resonates strongly in society and leaves no one indifferent. Several protests against the withdrawal took place across Latvia, the largest gathering 10 000 people in Riga on 6 November 2025, as well as in other European cities and even further abroad, including the United States, Canada and Australia.

Given its high societal resonance, this issue may be maintained by political parties as a voter mobilisation tool ahead of the parliamentary elections in autumn 2026.

2. Please explain how the Saeima intends to review the issue of the Latvia's adherence to the Istanbul Convention following the decision of the President to send the vote to withdraw back to the Latvian Parliament for reconsideration

Following the reasoned request by the President of Latvia to reconsider the withdrawal law, pursuant to Article 115, paragraph 1, of the Rules of Order of the Saeima⁵, the Saeima decided that 1 November 2026 would be set as the deadline for submitting proposals to the withdrawal law. In other words, the Saeima decided to set the withdrawal law aside until a new Saeima is elected and begins its work. According to Article 39 paragraph 2 of the Rules of Order of the Saeima, the new Saeima will have to decide whether to continue to examine the draft withdrawal law.

Consequently, if the new Saeima decides to continue work on the draft withdrawal law, according to the Article 115, paragraph 2, of the Rules of Order of the Saeima, when a law is reassessed following a reasoned request by the President of Latvia, the provisions for examination of a draft law in third reading shall be applicable but only the objections of the President and motions related to the objections raised by the President shall be examined.

The decisions of the President of Latvia and Saeima made it possible to await the opinion of the Venice Commission and the first assessment by GREVIO experts on Latvia's implementation of the Convention, which is expected in autumn 2026. These documents will help in countering the mis/dis-information being spread in the society and put the discussions in a more constructive framework.

On 16 October 2025, the Saeima approved the *Declaration on Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*. With this declaration, the Government has been instructed to draft a comprehensive law on the prevention and elimination of violence against women, children and domestic violence, as well as violence in general. The law is intended to cover all forms of violence against women and children, including domestic violence. The *Declaration* further notes the obligation to promote international cooperation and to provide support and assistance to

⁵ <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/57517-rules-of-order-of-saeima>

organisations and law-enforcement agencies thereby enabling them to work effectively together in establishing and implementing a holistic approach to eliminating violence.

In this context, the Ministry of Welfare, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Culture, State Chancellery, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Defence, has been instructed to prepare and submit the following documents to the Government:

- **an assessment** concerning the proposal contained in the Saeima's *Declaration of 16 October 2025*, specifically the proposal to draft a comprehensive law on the prevention and elimination of violence against women, children, domestic violence, and violence in general. The assessment shall take into account the existing legal framework in Latvia concerning the prevention and combating of violence, Latvia's international obligations, the practice of applying relevant regulatory enactments, policy planning documents, including the *Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence 2024–2029*, and other relevant documents in this field. The assessment shall provide concrete proposals for legislative improvements necessary to ensure the effective prevention and combating of violence.
- **a review** of the conformity of the existing national legislation and legal norms of the Republic of Latvia with the *Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024* on combating violence against women and domestic violence, as well as a plan for the transposition of the regulation provided for in this Directive.

At the same time, given that the EU has acceded to the Convention, as from 1 October 2023, EU Member States are bound by the provisions of the Convention as far as EU law is concerned in matters falling within the EU's competence. Thus, the Convention will enter the Latvian legal system through EU law.

Accordingly, if the newly elected members of Saeima resume consideration of the withdrawal law in November 2026, the newly constituted Foreign Affairs Committee shall, in addition to the considerations set out in the President's letter of 3 November 2025, be in a position to examine further documents prepared in the interim by the competent national and international authorities.

I hope that you will find the information provided in this letter useful.

Yours sincerely,



Ivars Pundurs

Ambassador, Permanent Representative