



HOUSE OF LORDS

International Agreements Committee

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Victoria Atkins MP
Minister for Safeguarding
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
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28 June 2021

Ratification of the Istanbul Convention and protection of migrant victims of domestic violence and abuse

Dear Victoria,

Thank you for appearing before the International Agreements Committee on 1 February to speak to us about the Government's progress towards ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention).

We are writing to follow up on our letter of 11 February, which set out our concerns regarding some of the issues that were discussed during our evidence session.

We discussed the areas where domestic legislative changes are required for UK ratification, including measures to support migrant victims who are experiencing violence and domestic abuse. You told us that before the Government could establish support measures for migrant victims, a pilot scheme would need to be launched to gather data on the needs of migrant victims. You had hoped that the scheme would begin in March or April 2021 and that it would run for 14 months, ending in mid-2022 at the earliest. Can you provide us with an update on how the scheme is progressing and if there are any changes to the timescales that you referred to?

We were very disappointed that the Government resisted Lords' amendments to the Domestic Abuse Bill which would have allowed for the provision of adequate support to all victims of domestic abuse, regardless of their migrant status. A clause of this type would have helped migrant victims access support services, and would have expedited the ratification of a Convention the UK signed over nine years ago. We note that the UK is the only western European country which has not ratified the Convention. At a time when some countries have withdrawn from the Convention for various domestic political reasons, it is imperative that the UK demonstrates international leadership in this area and puts in place the necessary domestic processes to ratify the Convention without further delay.

This letter is copied to Harriet Harman MP QC, the Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rt Hon the Lord Goldsmith QC'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, prominent loop at the end.

Rt Hon the Lord Goldsmith QC
Chair of the House of Lords International Agreements Committee