

Interactive Dialogue between the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the UK Government for the Combined twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth periodic reports submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) under Article 9 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

Statement by the Scottish Human Rights Commission, 13th August 2024

Thank you to the Committee and members of the Government delegation for enabling the Scottish Human Rights Commission to make the following remarks.

Since the last review by this committee the Scottish Government has embraced the challenge to institutions to become anti-racist. It is too soon to assess results, however the Scottish Government's record suggests there may be some challenges in converting principles into meaningful change.

There is a need for more tangible, measurable and informed actions to progress the Scotland's Race Equality Framework. Issues with data, particularly concerning further marginalised groups of people in Scotland, have been long noted without effective improvement.

Public institutions have worked to recognise and respond to how historic injustices perpetrated by the state continue to leave a legacy of inequalities in the enjoyment of convention rights. In our meeting with the Committee, we highlighted the forced assimilation of Gypsy /

Travellers as an example of how such harms can manifest in outcomes today, and an areas where the Commission is currently undertaking work alongside communities.

Immigration is a reserved matter; however the Scottish Government has demonstrated a commitment to supporting people who choose to make Scotland their home within the parameters of the constitution. Measures such as no-recourse to public funds conditions force many migrants into poverty or unsafe situations. We encourage both Governments to work together to end and if not end to mitigate the harms of such policies.

Incorporation of the convention, as the Scottish Government has committed to doing, offers a real prospect of justice for individuals who experience violations of their rights, but also significant proactive culture change across the whole public sector. We are waiting for the Scottish Government to set out how it will ensure the Bill is effective and robust, including for people who experience racial discrimination in their rights.

Finally, I was deeply stuck by the reflections of one woman who spoke to us in our pre-report engagement. She told us:

“We think from the way your government talks, the UK is where I will have rights. Then you get here and realise, there are no human rights, just Black and White.”

I encourage members of the delegation and members of this Committee to consider these words over the next two days, and in their follow up to this review.

Thank you.