

Contribution of the Republic of Cyprus to the Summit for Democracy

The Republic of Cyprus welcomes the Summit for Democracy and wishes to express its appreciation for the invitation to participate. The Government of the Republic of Cyprus considers the Summit as a timely initiative offering the opportunity of reinforcing global commitments to democracy and human rights.

In this regard, Cyprus is ready to engage with other partners, listen to their experiences, exchange best practices and lessons learned. The Government of the Republic of Cyprus has placed the protection and promotion of human rights at the top of its domestic and external agenda and aims to further bolster its commitment to protecting and promoting the rights of all human beings, within the framework of effective multilateralism. A reflection of this is our recently announced bid to gain a seat at the United Nations Human Rights Council, for the period 2025 to 2027. This momentous decision, being the first in our history, was initiated with the goals of identifying internal short-comings, improving responses to human rights challenges and bringing together partners from all spectrums, public and private sectors, as well as the civil society, with the common aim to build a better future for all.

Cyprus presents here-below a series of commitments and pledges composed of three clusters:

- 1) The protection of children within the educational system;
- 2) The advancement of gender equality; and
- 3) The protection of labor rights.

1) Protection of children and education

1.1 Under the National Strategy for Combating Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography is launching a series of measures in order to strengthen the flow of information and prevent sexual harassment of children. The Government identified the need for a specialized sexual education course and decided to include it in the curriculum, as the most important measure and tool for primary prevention of the sexual abuse and exploitation of children. The Government sets this as a priority the protection of children from sexual abuse and exploitation and recognizes the importance of prevention, focusing its efforts on promoting sexuality education in schools.

1.2 Supporting children with autism and their families, by strengthening support in the provision of specialized services aimed at improving social and other skills of the child's

daily life. This will start as early as possible in a child's life, before entering the official educational system.

1.3 The establishment of a child-friendly justice system for the protection and treatment of young offenders under the age of 18 is another top priority of the Government. In this regard, a wide range of justice structure reforms have been initiated. Following the recent adoption of the Bill from the House of Representatives, the Government pledges that modern child friendly structures, procedures and approaches that treat young offenders with dignity, respect and care are to be established. These structures will be easily accessible, easy to understand and reliable, while allowing different treatments bearing always the best interest of the child. The aim is to develop a child friendly justice system that will prevent and combat juvenile delinquency.

1.4 The objective of the above-mentioned legislation is the setting up of a child-centred and extrajudicial friendly environment for the treatment of young offenders and tackling juvenile delinquency, which will provide guarantees for the reformation, treatment, therapy and welfare support of the children. The detention of children is the ultimate measure and is enforced only in case all alternative measures to deal with juvenile offenders have been exhausted. At the same time, new institutions and procedures are introduced, such as the Decriminalization Programmes Monitoring Committees, Children Welfare Family Council, alternative community measures, restorative practices, Social Workers while the children's best interest is the primary consideration when making any decision that affects them directly or indirectly.

1.5 The Government is also committed to continuing and further enhancing the special education programs within the prison system, in order to make sure no one is denied access to education. The main objective is to guarantee smooth transition of individuals into society and labor market, after their release.

2) Advancement of gender equality

2.1 While there have been major initiatives, much work remains to be done. Statistics showing an overall increase in violence against women and young girls are very concerning and impel us to enact new measures in support of victims. The Government of Cyprus is committed to setting up a National Coordination Body to monitor and implement the Convention of the Council of Europe on Preventing and Combatting Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. This Body will have a wide range of responsibilities, including coordinating, planning, implementing and evaluating policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women. It will also put into practice

systematic training of professionals and first responders who deal with cases of violence, as well as awareness-raising activities for the general public on issues of gender-based and domestic violence.

2.2 Cyprus intends to create a Unified Archive to collate, analyze and process statistics on all forms of violence included in the Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. This will facilitate more targeted measures and policies to be planned, in order to tackle the problem of gender-based and domestic violence as effectively as possible.

2.3 The Government will continue its support to the Europe-wide telephone helpline for victims of gender-based violence, an initiative which was developed at a European level, with the aim of facilitating access for victims to support, protection and guidance services.

2.4 Cyprus will continue promoting the right to work for all, by strengthening the right to parental leave. The Government is in the preparatory process of adopting new legislation for the balance of professional and personal life for parents and carers. Additionally, the right to take care of a relative or a person living in the same household who needs care / support for serious medical reasons will be introduced, for the first time, in the legislation.

2.5 Recognizing the indispensable role of women in conflict-resolution, post-conflict rehabilitation, reconciliation, and sustainable peace, Cyprus completed its first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security on the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), covering the period 2021-2025, which will ensure the full implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. The main purpose is to recognize the disproportionate and different impact of war on women and girls, to highlight the role of women in the prevention and resolution conflict, and in building peace. The implementation of UNSCR 1325 will continue being an integral part of the domestic and foreign Policy of the Republic of Cyprus.

3) Protection of labor rights

3.1 The global pandemic has unfortunately exacerbated existing short-comings in the safeguarding of labor rights. A decision has been taken for measures which will strengthen the optimal protection of all workers and make full use of technologies. In this framework, my Government is committed to a tripartite dialogue in reshaping the traditional working environment using new technologies, allowing virtual ways of working routines, in order to protect the vulnerable and protect labor rights.

3.2 The Government of the Republic of Cyprus is in the process of ratifying the Convention of the International Labor Organization No. 189 on Domestic Workers, of 2011, in order to ensure the rights of a particularly vulnerable category of workers in Cyprus. The main provisions provide for measures for the elimination of all forms of forced / compulsory labor, eliminating child labor and eliminating discrimination in employment and occupation.

In addition to the above-mentioned policy oriented actions and pledges, the Republic of Cyprus is ready to consider new best practices announced during the Summit with the goal to present them next year.