



**FULL STATEMENT BY THE LAW COMMISSIONER
OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS, MS. SOPHIA KLEOPA
HADJIKYRIAKOU, HEAD OF THE CYPRUS DELEGATION
AT THE CONSIDERATION BY THE COMMITTEE ON THE
ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION
OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH PERIODIC REPORT OF CYPRUS
SUBMITTED UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL
DISCRIMINATION**

**GENEVA
16 APRIL, 2026**

Mr. Chair,

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

1. It is an honour and a privilege for me, together with the other members of the delegation of the Republic of Cyprus, to appear before your Committee to present and elaborate on the 25th Periodic Report of Cyprus, submitted under Article 9 of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination.

2. Please allow me to present the members of our delegation:

- Myself, Sophia Kleopa Hadjikyriakou, the **Law Commissioner of the Republic of Cyprus**, an independent State Official, directly accountable to the President of the Republic, with a fixed mandate of six years, having competence, inter alia, to make proposals for reform of the national legislation with a view to achieving compatibility with international human rights instruments, like the ICERD, and to prepare country reports under such international treaties based on a Decision of the Council of Ministers (Decision No. 38.958, dated 25/2/1993).
- **Mr. George Samuel, Deputy Permanent Representative**, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus to the United Nations in Geneva.
- **Ms. Vivian Konnari**, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus to the United Nations in Geneva.
- **Ms. Eleni Michail Loizou**, Chief Inspector, Head of the Office for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Crime Combating Department, Cyprus Police Headquarters.
- **Dr. Christiana Antonoudiou**, Officer for Justice and Public Order, Ministry of Justice and Public Order.
- **Dr. Andreas Tsiakkiros**, Senior Education Planning Officer, Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth.
- **Dr. Mikaella Kokkinou**, Health Attaché, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus to the United Nations in Geneva, representing the Ministry of Health.
- **Mr. Marios Mitsides**, Asylum Officer, Deputy Ministry of Migration and

International Protection.

- **Ms. Marina Efthymiadou Tzovani**, Social Services Officer, Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare.
- **Ms. Andri Savva**, Labour Officer, 1st Class, Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance.
- **Ms. Markella Bitsiouni**, Legal Officer, Office of the Law Commissioner.

Mr. Chair,

3. Cyprus attributes particular importance to the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) as the key international instrument in combating racism, and it gives due consideration to the recommendations of the Committee in the formulation and implementation of policies aimed at eliminating racial discrimination. Cyprus considers the reporting and review process to be an important component of its ongoing efforts in this area and looks forward to engaging in a constructive dialogue with the Committee.
4. Cyprus ratified the ICERD in 1967 and has been submitting its Country Reports since then.
5. During the period under review, from 2016 to date, Cyprus has achieved important progress in combating racial discrimination, by continuing to promote anti-racism projects, developing National Action Plans, and enacting several anti-discrimination laws, in line with binding international instruments and EU Law. It is important to stress that, one of the main priorities of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union (January 2026 to June 2026) is the protection and promotion of the rights and freedoms of all persons without discrimination. We are therefore here before you to report on the progress achieved within this framework, which is underpinned by strong political will and a firm commitment to equality and tolerance.
6. The social and economic policy of Cyprus promotes equal opportunities in employment, social protection, education and access to goods and services, with the aim of ensuring inclusive growth and improving the living conditions of vulnerable groups. Poverty indicators show a gradual improvement in recent years.

According to the most recent Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) in 2024, the proportion of the population at risk of poverty reached its highest level in the middle of the previous decade and has since followed a downward trend. Income inequality was also more pronounced during that period but has gradually stabilised in recent years. Current indicators suggest relatively moderate levels of income inequality, reflecting the presence of redistributive mechanisms such as taxation and social benefits. Cyprus also continues to provide voluntary contributions to United Nations funds and agencies engaged in human rights-related activities, reaffirming its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights.

7. I am in the regretful position to remind you that, due to the continuing illegal occupation of 36.2% of its territory by Turkish military forces, the Government of the Republic of Cyprus is not in a position to exercise effective control over the occupied areas of its territory and therefore, cannot ensure the application of the ICERD in areas not under its effective control. This is a fact reflected in the Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Question of Human Rights in Cyprus (January 2026). As a consequence, the Government of the Republic of Cyprus is unable to ensure full realization of its anti-discrimination policies and is deprived of its ability to apply anti-racism laws, policies and programmes to the people living in the part of the country under Turkish occupation. It is relevant to remind you that the accession of Cyprus to the EU was subject to Protocol 10 to the Act of Accession of 2003, according to which the application of the *acquis* is “*suspended in those areas in the Republic of Cyprus in which the Government of the Republic of Cyprus does not exercise effective control*”. In view of this, no reliable information or data are available regarding the enjoyment of the relevant rights by the population living in the occupied area of Cyprus. Thus, all information and data presented in our Country Report and in my statement today, concern the Government-controlled areas.

8. It is imperative to be clear from the outset that the Turkish Cypriots are not considered an ethnic minority in Cyprus. Under the 1960 Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, Turkish Cypriots constitute one of the two communities that reside on the island, the other being the Greek Cypriot community. Nationality was automatically granted to members of the two communities. Persons who were not

part of those communities were deemed to be part of a religious group and were required to join the Greek or Turkish community, either on an individual basis or jointly as a religious group, in order to hold civil and political rights in Cyprus. Since then, it had tacitly become accepted that the groups defined in the 1960 Constitution as religious groups — namely the Armenian, Latin and Maronite communities — held the rights granted to national minorities under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages to which Cyprus is a party.

9. A detailed and thorough analysis of the developments in legislation, administration, government policies and National Action Plans was given in our Country Report, covering the period 2016-2019. In my statement today, I will concentrate on presenting and briefly analyzing the developments thereafter. Detailed information concerning the whole period under review and developments thereafter will be given by our experts during the interactive dialogue that will ensue.

➤ **LEGISLATION**

10. Cyprus proceeded with the enactment and amendment of a significant number of legislative measures, which are set out in our Country Report (paras. 10-23) thus incorporating in the national legal order, a number of international and EU binding instruments and improving the country's anti-discrimination legal framework and policy. The most important are:

(i) *The Criminal Code [CAP.154 (as amended)]*

11. With an amendment of the Criminal Code in 2023, any form of conversion practice, technique or service aiming at changing or suppressing a person's sexual orientation, gender identity or expression constitutes a criminal offence. In 2024, penalties under Section 99A of the Criminal Code, relating to incitement to violence or hatred based on sexual orientation or gender identity, were increased.

(ii) *The Refugees Laws, 2025-*

12. The Refugees Laws of 2025 were drafted to replace the current legal framework, in the context of the new EU Migration and Asylum Reform. The bill was presented to the Parliament in March 2026 and is expected to be approved and come into effect later this year. The Law includes provisions for the establishment of an independent monitoring mechanism to provide for fundamental rights of third country nationals and asylum seekers, early detection of vulnerabilities, special reception needs, special procedural needs and effective response to such vulnerabilities and needs by the authorities, special guarantees for minors and unaccompanied minors, strict detention criteria, detention conditions that safeguard fundamental and human rights, family unity, access to education, health care and employment, language courses and vocational training, rights and obligations of beneficiaries of protection, and access to integration programs. With this legislative reform, the Republic of Cyprus aims to ensure a fair, equal, and non-discriminatory treatment by the authorities.

(iii) *The Rights of Persons who are Arrested and Detained Law*

[L. 163(I)/2005 (as amended)]

13. This Law was amended twice in 2021, introducing changes that strengthen detainees' rights and enhance transparency. The first amendment includes the Independent Authority for the Investigation of Allegations and Complaints Against the Police in section 15 ("Sending and receiving of correspondence"), allowing detainees to communicate directly with an independent oversight body. The second amendment repeals section 30 on the "abuse" of the right to medical examination, ensuring detainees' immediate and unhindered access to medical care.

(iv) Law on establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime [L.51(I)/ 2016, (as amended)]

14. This Law was amended in 2022 to further strengthen the implementation of the

existing human rights framework. The purpose of the amendment is to ensure that all rights established, such as access to information about their case, timely and appropriate support services, and protection from any form of intimidation or retaliation, are applied consistently and effectively across all relevant authorities. Furthermore, the amendment stipulates that all front-line professionals who may interact with victims or potential victims are required to receive proper training on the provisions of the law. Lastly, each relevant department must develop specific Codes of Conduct to ensure that the rights established by the law are respected and properly implemented.

(v) *The Legal Aid Law [L.165(I)/2002, (as amended)]*

15. This Law was amended in 2024 to bring Cyprus legislation in line with the Istanbul Convention. The amendment allows victims of gender-based or domestic violence to access legal aid more easily. Specifically, victims can receive legal aid by presenting a certificate from a relevant agency or organization confirming that they are receiving support from the Women's House Cyprus and/or a shelter, or by providing proof that they have filed an official complaint with the Cyprus Police. This change aims to improve access to justice and strengthen support for victims of violence.

(vi) *The Establishment and Operation of the Administrative Court Law (L.131(I)/2015) and the Administration of Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Law [L.33/1964] as amended*

16. Cyprus adopted judicial reforms to strengthen the justice system and enhance the efficiency of the courts. These reforms entail *inter alia*: first, the establishment of a Court of Appeal, which constitutes the second-instance court that has the authority to hear appeals from all court jurisdictions, except from the Administrative Court and the International Protection Administrative Court. Second, the establishment of the Administrative Court of Appeal, which is the second-instance court that has the jurisdiction to decide on appeals against decisions by the Administrative Court and the International Protection Administrative Court. These

reforms also provide the operation of two Supreme Courts: a) the Supreme Court, and b) the Supreme Constitutional Court. The Supreme Court decides on appeals against any decision of the Court of Appeal, that is not falling within the competence of the Supreme Constitutional Court. Whereas, the Supreme Constitutional Court has *inter alia* the jurisdiction to decide as a third and final instance over legal matters arising from the Administrative Court of Appeal against decisions of the Administrative Court or the International Protection Administrative Court

(vii) The Establishment and Operation of the Administrative Court of International Protection (L.73(I)/2018)

17. The Administrative Court of International Protection, was established in 2018, in order to facilitate and examine appeals, against the decisions of the Republic of Cyprus, regarding applications for international protection. The court examines cases relating exclusively to international protection claims, thereby ensuring greater expertise and a more coherent body of case law in this field. In 2026, the *Establishment and the Operation of the International Protection Administrative Court Law* was amended in order to shorten appeal deadlines, and ensure faster access to judicial remedies. The amendment also provides for the appointment of additional judges so as far to facilitate timely and efficient handling of cases.

(viii) Law on Prevention and Combating of School Violence [L.185(I)/2020 (as amended)]

18. This legislation introduces new tools and mechanisms to support the continuous improvement of the education system, with the aim of ensuring equal learning opportunities for all pupils in a safe and inclusive environment.

(ix) Law on Holistic Sexual Education [L. 205(I)/2022 (as amended)]

19. The objective of this law is to provide pupils with comprehensive knowledge and skills related to sexual and reproductive health, healthy relationships, rights and

responsibilities, and overall well-being. In line with this law, a Teachers' Manual on Child Sexual Abuse was developed to assist teachers in addressing these topics. The Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children translated the manual into English to ensure it is accessible to teachers who work with pupils whose first language is not Greek.

(x) *The Radio and Television Broadcasters Law, [L.7(I)/1998 (as amended)]*

20. This Law was amended in 2021 to include several provisions to address discriminatory content more effectively. It includes provisions aimed at preventing discrimination and incitement to violence or hatred. Media service providers are required to ensure that audiovisual media content does not contain material that incites violence or hatred against individuals or groups, in a manner that violates fundamental rights protected by the Constitution and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. Audiovisual commercial communications must comply with specific requirements and are prohibited from including or promoting discrimination on grounds such as sex, racial or ethnic origin, nationality, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. In addition, video-sharing platform providers are required to adopt appropriate measures to protect the public from programmes, user-generated content and audiovisual commercial communications that contain incitement to violence or hatred. These provisions form part of broader efforts to safeguard human dignity, promote equality and ensure that media services operate in accordance with fundamental human rights standards.

(xi) *The Radio and Television Stations Regulations (P.I.10/2000)*

21. Regulation 25(3)(a) stipulates that language which could offend or undermine the sensitivities of religious, racial, political, or other social groups is not permitted.

(xii) *Law on the application of EU Regulation 2022/2065 on a Single Market for Digital Services (L122(I)/2025)*

22. This Law was introduced to harmonize Cyprus legislation with the EU-wide

framework designed to create a safer, fairer online environment by regulating digital intermediaries, protecting users from illegal content, and safeguarding fundamental rights, including non-discrimination.

23. The law also includes the "Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online+," which aims to prevent and address the spread of hate speech online. In 2025, the Radio Television and Digital Services Authority was designated as Cyprus's **Digital Services Coordinator** under Law 122(I)/2025, responsible for the Act's national supervision, implementation and enforcement.
24. Between 2020 and 2025, the Cyprus Radio Television and Digital Services Authority examined various cases against radio and television broadcasters regarding issues of racial discrimination.

(xiii) Combatting of Sexism and Online Dissemination of Sexism and Related Matters Law (L. 209(I)/2020)

25. Cyprus adopted this pioneering Law, marking a decisive advancement in safeguarding human dignity and eliminating gender-based discrimination. By criminalising sexist behaviour, including its online manifestations, and by challenging harmful gender stereotypes, the law promotes substantive equality, fosters safer and more inclusive public spaces, and reinforces Cyprus' broader commitment to human rights and non-discrimination. In December 2024, the Council of Ministers appointed the Commissioner for Gender Equality responsible for monitoring the implementation of the legislation. The Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality and the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, in September 2025, launched a campaign to raise awareness for the provisions of the legislation. Additionally, an ad hoc committee with representatives from the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality and the Cyprus Police was established to further promote measures to combat sexism and online sexism

➤ NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTION

26. The National Human Rights Institution of Cyprus received A-status accreditation from the Sub-Committee on Accreditation in October 2022, following a previous deferral. During the review, the NHRI reported measures taken to address earlier Sub-Committee on Accreditation recommendations, including the establishment of a Human Rights Advisory Committee to strengthen cooperation with civil society and enhance its visibility. The Committee is intended to include organisations representing groups such as LGBTIQ+ persons, persons with disabilities and women. The Sub-Committee on Accreditation encouraged the National Human Rights Institution to ensure the Committee becomes fully operational and to further strengthen its engagement with civil society and human rights defenders. The Sub-Committee on Accreditation also highlighted the need for adequate funding to support the National Human Rights Institution's expanded mandates, including its roles under OPCAT and the CRPD. In response, the National Human Rights Institution strengthened its human resources through the recruitment of additional officers and support staff and the promotion of existing personnel. Additional staffing is considered necessary due to the expansion of its responsibilities. These include the monitoring of compliance of EU-funded programmes with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

➤ NATIONAL ACTION PLANS, NATIONAL STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

27. National Action Plans and Strategies have been developed and continue to be developed and upgraded aiming to combat and eliminate discrimination.

28. **National Strategy on Gender Equality (NSGE).** The new NSGE 2024-2026 is the most important policy document on equality between men and women and is being used as a guideline to mainstream gender policies and actions of all Ministries/Deputy Ministries on a horizontal basis. It was drafted following an extensive consultation between relevant Government Services, social partners, and media representatives. It contains 14 thematic areas and 64 targeted actions related to mainstreaming gender across public policies, such as in budgeting, foreign policy,

transport, justice and sport and Media. Immigrant women, women with disabilities, single parents and elderly women are also included in the NSGE.

- 29. National Action Plan on “Women, Peace and Security” (NAPWPS).** This National Action Plan implements UN Resolution 1325 and is the second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2026-2028). The second NAPWPS is a continuation of the first National Action Plan, while also complementing actions implemented within the framework of the NSGE 2024–2026, adopting a more targeted and holistic approach. It aims to further strengthen the institutional, strategic, and operational importance of integrating the gender perspective into the formulation and implementation of policies on security, defense, and international relations, and aims to deepen cross-sectoral cooperation, ensuring the meaningful involvement of all competent stakeholders and civil society in achieving the objectives of Resolution 1325. The Commissioner for Gender Equality has competence to monitor, coordinate and evaluate the implementation of both the NSGE and the NAPWPS.
- 30. National Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violence Against Women 2023-2028.** The National Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violence Against Women 2023–2028 constitutes Cyprus’s strategic framework for addressing and preventing violence against women and girls. Its main objective is to strengthen prevention through awareness campaigns, educational initiatives, and community engagement. The Plan also focuses on improving protection and support services for victims, including access to shelters, psychological support, counselling, and legal assistance. In addition, it promotes cooperation and coordination among government bodies, independent authorities, and civil society organizations involved in tackling gender-based violence. Furthermore, the Action Plan emphasizes the importance of specialized training for professionals who work with victims, such as police officers, judges, healthcare providers, and social workers. It also encourages the systematic collection of data and research in order to better understand the prevalence and forms of violence against women. The framework is aligned with international standards and obligations, including the Istanbul Convention, aiming to ensure a comprehensive and effective response to gender-based violence while

strengthening the protection of victims and promoting gender equality.

31. In the context of ensuring equal participation of all citizens in the democratic process, the Republic of Cyprus has undertaken concrete measures to strengthen the political rights of Turkish Cypriots. Pursuant to Law No. 2(I)/2006, Turkish Cypriots residing in Government-controlled areas and holding a Republic of Cyprus identity card have the right to register on the permanent electoral roll, thereby enjoying full equality in participating in all national elections; currently, 834 individuals are registered under this provision. At the same time, Law No. 10(I)/2004 provides for the automatic inclusion in the electoral roll for European Elections of citizens residing in areas not under the effective control of the Government, resulting in 103,281 Turkish Cypriots being included in the 2024 European Elections—an increase of 24.55% compared to 2019. This progress is attributed to targeted actions undertaken by the Ministry of the Interior, including the introduction of an online service to verify eligibility, the distribution of informational material at crossing points, and practical measures to facilitate access to polling stations, such as the establishment of special polling centers near the Green Line, transportation services, clear road signage, and digital navigation instructions. These efforts form part of a broader approach aimed at promoting equality, inclusiveness, and the effective exercise of rights by all citizens—key elements in preventing discrimination and, by extension, contributing to the elimination of all forms of violence.

➤ **DEVELOPMENTS IN THE WORKPLACE – WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS**

32. Cyprus is committed to continuing its efforts in improving working and living conditions especially for the more vulnerable groups. The most important recent developments include the following:
33. The Department of Labour of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance continues to inspect the private employment agencies at least once a year, in an effort to prevent trafficking and exploitation of workers. During 2024 the Department inspected 223 private employment agencies and revoked the license of 14 private employment agencies that were found to be in breach of the provisions of the relevant legislation.

Moreover, the competent authority imposed administrative fines on three agencies which were involved in fraudulent practices.

- 34.** Following a policy review in 2023, asylum seekers in Cyprus are permitted to access the labour market nine months after submitting their application for international protection. Their employment is limited to specific sectors and occupations where work is allowed, taking into account labour market conditions such as unemployment levels and skills shortages. Priority is given to occupations where there is a limited availability of workers from Cyprus or the European Union. The list of eligible sectors is regularly updated to include additional occupations when needed. Employers wishing to hire asylum seekers must submit an application to the Department of Labour through a simplified procedure. This policy allows asylum seekers to participate in the economy in a regulated and lawful manner while safeguarding employment opportunities for local workers. At the same time, it promotes the gradual integration of asylum seekers into the workforce, balancing humanitarian considerations with economic requirements.
- 35.** The Social Welfare Services provide Material Reception Conditions (monthly allowances for their basic needs, electricity, water supply, petty cash expenses and rent) to asylum seekers who cannot be accommodated at a Reception Centre. Priority is given to vulnerable people and families with children at risk, including arrangements for temporary housing and accommodation (i.e. hotels/hotel apartments).
- 36.** The Social Welfare Services also provide support to unaccompanied minors and have developed additional programmes specifically tailored to address their particular needs. These initiatives include the provision of specialised accommodation as well as access to a range of relevant support services. In this context, the foster care programme has been further expanded in cooperation with NGOs. Furthermore, a semi-independent living programme has been implemented in collaboration with NGOs and the International Organization for Migration Office in Cyprus, aiming to facilitate the gradual transition of older unaccompanied minors towards independent living. As of 1st January, 2026, according to the Decision of the Council of Ministers, the development and operation of programmes (i.e. homes, semi-independent living, etc.) has been transferred under the jurisdiction of the Deputy Ministry of Migration

and International Protection. The Director of the Social Welfare Services is appointed as their guardian according to the national law, safeguarding access to their rights and services, based on the best interest of the child, in cooperation with all the relevant services and stakeholders

37. ROMA: In December 2021, the Social Welfare Services submitted to the European Commission the National Roma Strategic Framework of the Republic of Cyprus. This framework delineates the social priorities of the Republic of Cyprus for the period 2021–2030, details the programmes developed by the competent authorities, and establishes national objectives and measures to promote equality, social inclusion, and the active participation of Roma communities residing in areas under the effective control of the Republic of Cyprus. To ensure effective oversight, a dedicated Committee has been established to monitor the implementation of the Strategic Framework. The Committee comprises representatives from the relevant Ministries, Departments, and Services, as well as from non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

➤ **DEVELOPMENTS IN HEALTHCARE**

38. The Health Insurance Organization is responsible for the operation and implementation of the General Healthcare System which is based on the principles of social solidarity, justice and universality and provides comprehensive healthcare services coverage — from primary care to specialist treatment and hospital care — to eligible residents through a network of contracted public and private providers. It was launched in June 2019 and by June 2020, Inpatient Healthcare Services, Accident and Emergency Departments and Ambulance Services were also added to the list of services provided. Since then, new services have been gradually added based on emerging needs, to ensure equitable access to healthcare services for all beneficiaries, as defined in the General Healthcare System Law and further explained in the next paragraph. The main sources of funding of the General Healthcare System are: mandatory contributions from employees, employers, the state, self-employed individuals, pensioners and income earners, as well as co-payments and contributions by beneficiaries. Additionally, the HIO has taken measures to address the specialized needs of certain groups of GHS beneficiaries, such as: co-payment caps

for recipients of documented low-income earners/pensioners and individuals under the age of 21; establishment of chronic patient registries for a number of conditions, aiming at more targeted service delivery and management, based on their specific needs, for example, through prioritized access and enhanced benefits for individuals whose condition warrants additional support, such as an increased number of physiotherapy sessions.

- 39.** The law establishing the General Healthcare System has been supplemented with regulations, internal regulations and decisions (e.g., Terms and Conditions for the Provision of Pharmaceutical Products outside the List of General Healthcare System the Pharmaceutical Products in 2024 and Procedure for the Referral of Beneficiaries Abroad for Medical Treatment in 2025), reflecting ongoing legislative fine-tuning. Coverage decisions and eligibility criteria are detailed in General Healthcare System regulatory updates, ensuring transparency and consistency in access.

- 40.** The General Healthcare System ensures that all individuals residing in the areas controlled by the Republic of Cyprus have access to the same comprehensive range of healthcare services as Cypriot citizens, without discrimination, exceptions, or exclusions. Under the current legal framework, beneficiaries of healthcare services are any persons who have their habitual residence in the areas controlled by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, who are also: citizens of the Republic of Cyprus, citizens of the European Union who are employed or self-employed in the areas controlled by the Republic of Cyprus, or have acquired the right of permanent residence there, third-country nationals who have legally acquired the right of permanent residence in the areas controlled by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus under the Aliens and Immigration Law, third-country nationals who have legally acquired the right to equal treatment in the branches of social security under the Aliens and Immigration Law, recognised refugees, or persons with subsidiary protection granted thereto under the provisions of the Refugees Law, family members and dependents of all the above categories, as well as citizens of the Republic of Cyprus who have their habitual residence in the territories of the British sovereign bases in Cyprus.

41. Emergency care services remain available to all, and asylum seekers can access free public healthcare services outside the General Healthcare System, while their applications are processed.
42. Within this framework, the Ministry of Health implemented two comprehensive strategies, the first one promoted children's rights in health and the second one aimed at safeguarding the sexual and reproductive health of young people under the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Youth Rights Strategy. Both strategies were implemented in coordination with relevant ministries, schools, non-governmental organisations, and international partners, ensuring a rights-based, youth-centred approach to health and well-being. I would also like to note that both strategies were completed at the end of 2025, and the Ministry of Health is currently undertaking an evaluation and formulating recommendations based on their outcomes.

➤ **DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ROLE OF THE POLICE COMBATING DISCRIMINATION**

43. The measures implemented by the Cyprus Police demonstrate a comprehensive approach to combating racial discrimination and promoting human rights within law enforcement. Institutional reforms, specialized operational structures, improved detention standards, and extensive training programmes have contributed to strengthening the capacity of the Police to address discrimination and protect vulnerable individuals.

Institutional Framework

44. The institutional framework for the protection of human rights in Cyprus has been strengthened through the establishment and development of specialized structures within the Ministry of Justice and Public Order and the Cyprus Police.
45. The Department of Human Rights of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, which was established in 2017 and has since been further strengthened, plays a central role in promoting awareness of human rights, developing policy recommendations, and supporting the implementation of non-discrimination principles

46. In parallel, the Cyprus Police have increased their efforts to ensure that policing practices comply with national legislation, European Union standards, and international human rights obligations. This includes policy development, awareness initiatives, cooperation with civil society organizations, and the integration of human rights considerations into operational procedures.

Police Code of Ethics and Operational Guidelines

47. A significant development in strengthening ethical policing has been the revision of the Police Code of Ethics, aligning it with contemporary standards and key European and national frameworks. The revised Code sets clear standards of behaviour, emphasizing integrity, accountability, professionalism, and respect for human dignity, while guiding decision-making in balancing law enforcement duties with fundamental rights. It also provides guidance on police conduct during operations, including investigations, questioning, arrests, and detention, promoting lawful, proportionate, and non-discriminatory practices. To ensure transparency and accessibility, the Code has been distributed to all police members and is available on the internal portal and official website.

48. In addition, practical manuals have been developed, including a Human Rights Handbook and a Manual on the Treatment of Juvenile Victims, supporting officers in applying human rights standards in practice.

49. Overall, these tools contribute to a more consistent, informed, and rights-based approach to policing.

Awareness Raising and Cooperation with NGOs and community stakeholders

50. The Cyprus Police have implemented a number of awareness-raising initiatives aimed at strengthening respect for human rights within law enforcement activities.

(i) The “Respect for Human Rights” Conference

51. Since 2016, the Cyprus Police organises an annual conference titled “Respect for Human Rights,” held in connection with International Human Rights Day. The conference serves as a platform for dialogue between police officials, academics, civil society representatives, and other stakeholders.

(ii) Memorandum of cooperation with NGOs

52. Cooperation with civil society organizations has been strengthened through a 2017 Memorandum of Understanding with fourteen NGOs. This framework supports activities such as detention facility visits, training, information exchange, and educational initiatives, aiming to enhance transparency, improve detainee treatment, and promote human rights within the criminal justice system.

53. In 2026, an additional Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Cyprus Red Cross to further enhance cooperation. It aims to safeguard human rights and improve the management of shared responsibilities, building on existing collaboration while clearly defining areas of joint action. This partnership contributes to ensuring dignified detention conditions and promoting equality, respect, and human dignity

(iii) Informational Materials

54. Furthermore, the Cyprus Police have developed informational materials, including brochures and leaflets promoting awareness and informing the public and its personnel about human rights and the rights of victims of gender-based violence. These materials have been translated into multiple languages to ensure accessibility for individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

(iv) Police training manual on gender-based violence

55. The training manual on gender-based violence is also an important tool that assists and guides police officers in dealing with such cases and incidents. Within the framework of police training, new protocols have been established to improve the

way police officers investigate serious cases, such as rape.

56. In addition, all police recruits and police officers receive training at the Cyprus Police Academy on handling cases involving children and on safeguarding the rights of vulnerable victims of crime.

Strengthening the protection of Vulnerable Groups

57. In 2021, the Cyprus Police established the Safeguarding Sub-Directorate with the objective of strengthening the protection of vulnerable groups within society. The Sub-Directorate coordinates several specialized units dealing with domestic violence, child abuse, juvenile delinquency, missing persons, and sexual exploitation of minors. The creation of this structure has enhanced the ability of the Cyprus Police to manage complex cases involving vulnerable individuals and to ensure that investigations are conducted by officers with specialized training and expertise. The Sub-Directorate also develops operational protocols and training programmes designed to improve the handling of such cases.
58. An important innovation in this field is the introduction of the “ELPIS” mobile application, which allows victims of domestic violence to discreetly alert the Cyprus Police and transmit their location in emergency situations. This tool improves access to police assistance and facilitates rapid response in situations where victims may not be able to communicate openly.
59. In 2022, a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between the Police and the Social Welfare Services, under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order and the Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare, concerning the referral, handling, protection and briefing of potential and recognised victims of trafficking. The Memorandum supports the Government's efforts to combat trafficking effectively and to protect the victims. It aims to ensure the effective identification, referral, handling, protection, and support of both potential and officially recognized victims of trafficking, while clearly defining the roles, responsibilities, and obligations of all parties involved, thereby promoting a coordinated and multidisciplinary approach. On this basis, and through a European co-funded project, the SWS of the Deputy

Ministry of Social Welfare operates a Unit for Managing Human Trafficking, since 2023, aiming at providing more personalized support to victims.

Combating Racism and Hate Crime

(i) The Human Rights and Combating Discrimination Office

60. The Human Rights and Combating Discrimination Office of the Cyprus Police monitors the implementation of recommendations by national and European human rights bodies, such as the Ombudsman and the Committee for the Prevention of Torture, focusing on preventing discrimination and addressing hate crimes. The Office prioritizes the dissemination of knowledge to police personnel by developing handbooks and informational material, organizing awareness seminars, and delivering training in cooperation with the Cyprus Police Academy and the Ministry of Justice and Public Order. It also handles policy matters related to combating discrimination and maintains statistical data on complaints and criminal cases involving racist offences

(ii) Appointment of Liaison Officers for Combating Discrimination

61. To strengthen coordination at the operational level, liaison officers responsible for combating discrimination have been appointed in each district. These officers supervise the investigation of complaints related to racist incidents and hate crimes and ensure that relevant cases are sufficiently reported to the central office for monitoring and statistical analysis.

(iii) Reporting Forms and Questionnaires for Hate Crime and related offences

62. A specialized reporting form and questionnaire have been introduced for incidents involving racist motivation or other forms of hate crime. This mechanism ensures systematic recording of incidents and enables the Police to identify patterns, evaluate responses, and develop targeted preventive measures.

(iv) Data Collection

63. In addition to formally recorded hate crimes, the Office collects data from various official and non-official sources, including police station logbooks, civil society organizations, other non-police agencies, media reports, and direct victim disclosures. Unofficial information is cross-checked with other sources and, where appropriate, formally recorded and processed as hate crimes. To facilitate transparency and accountability the relevant statistics are available upon request to researchers and national or international bodies and are also published on the Cyprus Police website.

Improved Detention Conditions and Protection of Detainees' Rights

64. The Cyprus Police have also taken steps to improve detention conditions and ensure that detainees' rights are respected and in compliance with the recommendations of the Committee for the Prevention of Torture and the Office of the Ombudsman. Renovation works have been carried out in several police detention centres, while new inspection mechanisms have been introduced to monitor detention conditions and identify areas requiring improvement. Additional measures include enhanced cleaning procedures, suicide-prevention protocols for detainees identified as high-risk, and the introduction of standardized detainee files to ensure consistency and uniformity in documentation.

65. The guide entitled "*Rights of Detained Persons*" has been translated into numerous languages to ensure that detainees are informed of their rights regardless of their linguistic background.

66. Improved recreational activities and facilities have also been introduced in detention centers in order to improve detainees' well-being during their stay, such as outdoor exercise areas, access to outdoor activities, educational courses, access to exercise equipment, books, computers, games, television and wi-fi facilities.

Continuous Training on Human Rights

- 67.** Continuous human rights training is a core component of police education in Cyprus. The Cyprus Police Academy integrates human rights principles into recruit training, specialized courses, and leadership programs, aiming to align police culture with the country's multicultural context and promote respect for all individuals regardless of culture, religion, sexual orientation, or origin.
- 68.** Training covers topics such as combating racism and xenophobia, investigating hate crimes, multicultural communication, ethical policing, and preventing torture or ill-treatment. Activities involve contributions from governmental bodies and NGOs, including the Ombudsman, UNHCR, the Attorney General's Office, and Social Welfare Services. Recruits also complete a university-level course on "Policing and Human Rights" and participate in international training programs.
- 69.** Additionally, Cyprus Police actively participate in European projects to improve police responses to discrimination, racism, and gender-based violence.
- 70.** The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth remains committed to preventing discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, language, religion, colour or national origin. Since the submission of the previous Report, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth has undertaken a range of measures aimed at eliminating racial discrimination through a systematic and multi-dimensional approach. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth continues to promote the development of a democratic and human-centred school environment in which all children learn and are prepared together for their common future.
- 71.** During the 2024–2025 school year, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth piloted an Optional All-Day Secondary School Programme. The initiative is supported by the European Commission's DG REFORM and UNESCO and aligns with European Union priorities for inclusive and quality education. The programme aims to improve educational outcomes and reduce early school leaving.
- 72.** A programme for unaccompanied minors and applicants for international protection

is implemented in secondary and technical schools. The programme aims to strengthen pupils' academic skills and facilitate their social integration within the school environment and the wider community.

- 73.** Promoting awareness against racism and intolerance, as well as fostering equality and respect, constitutes an integral part of the revised curricula of several subjects.
- 74.** Between 2023 and 2025, the Youth Board of Cyprus funded fourteen bi-communal projects and nine projects addressing racism under the Youth Initiatives Programme.
- 75.** In 2023, a public awareness campaign aimed at informing the public about racism and promoting social inclusion was launched. The campaign's ambassador was a young woman from Cameroon.
- 76.** In addition, the programme "Together We Stand" is implemented with the aim of preventing school bullying. By the end of 2025, approximately 1,800 pupils and 200 teachers have participated in training activities under the programme.
- 77.** The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth continues to implement and further develop its strategic plan entitled "Raising Awareness Against Racism and Intolerance and Promoting Equality and Respect," which was renewed in October 2025.
- 78.** Schools in the Republic of Cyprus are also encouraged to implement the anti-racism policy "Code of Conduct Against Racism and Guide for Managing and Recording Racist Incidents." Within this framework, schools have developed activities involving pupils, teachers and parents. These initiatives also contribute to the promotion of tolerance and peaceful coexistence in the context of ongoing efforts towards resolving the political problem and achieving the reunification of the island.
- 79.** The Cyprus Observatory on School Violence participates in the European Erasmus+ project BONDS (Building towards prevention and management of Delinquent behaviours at Schools). The project aims to develop a sustainable approach to the prevention and management of delinquent behaviour in primary

schools and to support teachers in fostering a positive school environment that promotes pupils' well-being.

- 80.** In November 2024, the National Strategy for the Prevention and Management of School Violence for 2024-2028 was launched. The Strategy adopts a holistic approach, actively involving all relevant stakeholders in efforts to prevent and address school violence and delinquency and emphasises the development of pupils' social and emotional skills.
- 81.** The Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children translated the Teachers' Manual on Child Sexual Abuse into English to ensure accessibility for teachers working with pupils whose first language differs from the language of instruction.
- 82.** The Educational Psychology Service has developed preventive interventions, primarily in primary education, aimed at strengthening pupils' social skills, including acceptance, understanding of social rules, active listening and mutual support. The Service also provides support to teachers by addressing their professional needs and develops interventions for parents to strengthen their supportive role, particularly during key transitional stages in their children's education. In addition, the Service has contributed to training activities for policy-makers in order to enhance their understanding of children's needs in a changing social context.
- 83.** In 2024, a seminar on Human Rights and Mass Media was organised for secondary school pupils as part of a media literacy initiative.
- 84.** An initiative has also been launched by the Deputy Ministry of Culture in cooperation with the Youth Organization in December 2023, regarding the Youth Culture Card, a prepaid card loaded with €220, that allows youth of 18-21 years to attend concerts, festivals, theatre, dance performances, art exhibitions, film screenings, arts festivals, visit museums, and archaeological sites as well as purchase books free of charge.

➤ DEVELOPMENTS IN CULTURE

85. Cyprus' cultural policy combines financial support, inclusivity, accessibility, decentralization, and audience engagement to foster participation, heritage preservation, and social integration. To this end, many initiatives have been undertaken:

- The "Culture 2021–2025" Programme supports cultural activities through targeted funding, creating opportunities for agencies, groups, and individuals across literature, music, dance, visual arts, theatre, cinema, and traditional culture.
- The 'Cultural Activities by Religious Groups' Programme (2019) enables the Maronite, Armenian, and Latin communities to produce artistic work in their own language, preserving cultural diversity and promoting heritage awareness.
- The literary translation programme fosters respect for linguistic diversity by subsidizing translations between Greek and Turkish, including works by Turkish Cypriot authors.
- On 17th June 2025, a migrant workshop at the Cyprus Handicraft Service taught traditional crafts such as ceramics, embroidery, and basket weaving, supporting integration and economic empowerment.
- The Cultural Decentralization Programme (since 2016) brings arts to rural communities, promotes culture, encourages artist mobility, and develops artistic perception for both creators and audiences.
- Visitor experiences are enhanced through digital upgrades in monuments and archaeological sites, including QR code guides.
- Audience development targets various groups, including children, youth, amateur, rural, international, and specialized audiences, using research and

surveys to align activities, programmes and grant schemes with actual needs and international practices.

86. During the period under review, there were significant positive developments regarding Cyprus's compliance with the letter and the spirit of the ICERD. Many anti-discrimination laws were enacted or updated and policies adopted, several National Action Plans were initiated, as an ongoing process, aiming at promoting human rights and combating racism and all forms of discrimination.

87. Mr Chair, Distinguished Members of the Committee, allow me to conclude by reaffirming the steadfast commitment of the Republic of Cyprus to the effective implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and to the ongoing strengthening of measures aimed at preventing and combating racial discrimination. We attach great importance to our constructive dialogue with the Committee, as it supports our continuous efforts to enhance legislation, institutions, policies and practices in line with our international obligations. Cyprus will continue to work consistently towards promoting equality, combating discrimination in all its forms, and fostering an inclusive society based on respect for human dignity and the rule of law. We thank the Committee for its careful consideration of our Report and look forward to continuing our cooperation in the period ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Chair