



ADDRESS BY THE LAW COMMISSIONER  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS,  
MRS LEDA KOURSOMBA,  
HEAD OF THE CYPRUS DELEGATION  
WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE  
UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW OF CYPRUS  
13<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE  
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL  
1 - 26 MARCH 2010  
GENEVA

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Cyprus is present here today because it takes its international commitments and responsibilities seriously. This is particularly so in relation to human rights international and intergovernmental mechanisms, among which the UPR is the latest and, potentially, the most promising, thanks to its peer review character. However, as in any peer review mechanism, one accepts to be subjected to the review by his peers on the understanding that the process is based on clearly defined and universal rules, which ensure the development of the required peer review culture.

As a state under review, Cyprus has taken a self-critical look and accepted to discuss with peers the challenges it faces and, where necessary, to take steps to improve its human rights situation, naturally expecting to be treated by its peers in accordance with the principles and objectives of the UPR process. Regretfully that was not the case.

Despite that, the government of Cyprus took the decision to respond, to the recommendations out of respect to those states who adopted a constructive and serious approach to this valuable human rights process.

The response to the recommendations is without prejudice to our declared position towards the report as was adopted by the UPR Working Group, and cannot be interpreted as endorsing in any way the content of paragraph 38.

Mr President,  
Out of a total number of 70 recommendations, Cyprus accepts the overwhelming majority as enumerated in Section B of the document submitted as Addendum. Cyprus is not able to accept only the recommendations concerning the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families. This is an issue which requires further consideration, bearing in mind the limitations posed by European Union jurisdiction and competence on the matter.

There are four recommendations referred to in Section E of the Addendum, which could neither be accepted nor rejected. As far as the recommendation regarding the Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearances is concerned, Cyprus reiterates the importance it attaches to it. The competent authorities are currently evaluating the possible ramifications of its ratification on the national legislation. Recommendations No. 25, No. 54 and No. 69 are not confined to the human rights perspective, but are rather linked to the overall political issue of Cyprus. Our comments to the said recommendations are included in Section E of the Addendum.

Mr. President,  
Cyprus has received all the recommendations with an open spirit and a genuine intention to engage in a meaningful internal evaluation in order to further enhance the level of human rights protection and advance their full enjoyment. Through this thorough evaluation process we recognized that, despite the substantial progress achieved up to the present, additional and continuous effort is required to meet the constantly arising new challenges in the field of human rights. This is reflected in the number of recommendations that we accepted.

In this context we wish to announce that:

- The instrument of ratification for the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict will be submitted within 3 months.
- The instrument of ratification for the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Civil and Cultural Rights, as well as, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities will be submitted within the next 18 months.
- The government undertakes the commitment to submit all reports due to the Human Rights Mechanisms within the next 24 months.
- Within the same time-frame Cyprus undertakes to make its National Human Rights Institution fully compatible with the Paris Principles, including its financial independence, as the relevant bill has to go through parliamentary procedures.

Cyprus wishes to reiterate that it has already ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment of 2002, on April 29, 2009.

Mr. President,

The rights of children are an area of prime concern for my government. The relevant monitoring mechanism of the Commissioner for Children's Rights was established in 2007, in full compliance with the Paris Principles and General Comment No. 2 of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Its recommendations are duly taken into consideration by the Government which is committed to constantly review and improve its policies on the matter.

Equally, the promotion of women's rights and wider gender equality is a major priority of the Cypriot Government and an issue that is dealt with at the highest level. The first 5-year National Action Plan on Gender Equality, of 2007 incorporates a holistic approach to gender equality in addressing six priority areas, namely: employment, education, decision-making, social rights, violence, and gender stereotypes. This was made possible through close collaboration of all government departments, local authorities, women's organizations, relevant NGOs, academic institutions and human rights mechanisms. A Ministerial Committee on Gender Equality has been set up recently to monitor its implementation.

Concerning Human Rights Education and Training, further to what was submitted in our National Report, Cyprus announces that within the framework of the "Annual Work Programme 2012" of the Fundamental Rights Agency, a series of actions under the title "Human Rights assessment of curricula and teaching material" will be undertaken.

In relation to domestic violence, the concerted actions of governmental and non-governmental agencies are based on the relevant Law, as well as on the Manual of Interdepartmental Procedures, which is currently being revised in order to render the process more effective. A five year National Action Plan is at a final stage of deliberation.

Concerning cases of police misconduct, the government is undertaking measures in order to fully comply with the standards set by the Council of Europe. Several mechanisms are already in place for investigating allegations of police misconduct and/or imposing sanctions where appropriate. These include criminal procedures, the Independent

Authority for the Investigation of Allegations against the Police, the appointment of independent investigators by the Attorney General, the Ombudsman, the Commissioner for Children's Rights, the Police Audit and Inspection Directorate, and internal police disciplinary procedures. In 2009 the Directory of Professional Standards was established by the Police, as an internal self-monitoring mechanism. The Police has recently incorporated at all levels of police training, specialized courses, lectures, and workshops on human rights, racism, and diversity.

The Government of Cyprus is determined to prevent and combat the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual or labor exploitation. In this context and, in addition to the legal and other measures that the Government is taking, Cyprus would like to extend an open invitation to countries of origin for cooperation in combating trafficking in human beings.

Mr. President,

Cyprus recognizes that the constant influx of irregular immigrants poses a major challenge. An unprecedented influx of irregular migrants in the last decade placed extreme pressure on financial and human resources of a small island state like Cyprus. Nevertheless, we recognize the challenges and will continue to honor our relevant international commitments. We are fully conscious of the human dimension of migration and the need to ensure that individuals, in whatever circumstances, ought to receive respect and enjoy dignity.

I will not prolong this address, bearing in mind the time constrain of the process.

We are naturally at your disposal for providing any further clarification you may wish to raise.

I thank you Mr. President