



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Address by the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. Alexandros N. Zenon**

Human Rights Council 4th Session,

Geneva, 13 March 2007

Mr. President,

I would like at the outset to express my sincere gratitude to Ambassador Luis Alfonso de Alba, as the first President of the Human Rights Council (HRC), for his tireless efforts and vision during this historic year for the Council.

Cyprus fully subscribes to the statement delivered by the distinguished Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany on behalf of the European Union.

The establishment of the HRC is a milestone in further strengthening the United Nations (UN) human rights machinery. It represents an important step in the UN reform process. The Council should continue promoting, in a sustained and result-oriented manner, a sincere dialogue and co-operation in human rights, divorced from political controversies and double standards.

A good outcome of the ongoing "institution building process" will lead to an effective component of the UN Human Rights System. I therefore believe that the Council should complete the institutional-building process by June this year, as mandated by the relevant United Nations General Assembly resolution (60/251) and achieve tangible results. Within this context, I would like to express our appreciation to the efforts made by all facilitators in the institution-building working groups, as well as to the members and observers to the Human Rights Council, for their active participation.

On 20 December 2006 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons From Enforced Disappearance. The Government of Cyprus considers that this is a significant step forward in the promotion and protection of human rights and that it will also serve as a powerful deterrent to prevent enforced disappearances and torture and to fight impunity for those crimes in the future. I am pleased that my country, was among the first signatories at the ceremony in Paris on 6 February 2007.

I would also like to welcome the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 December 2006 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We express our hope that through its ratification and implementation in the near future, the 650 million persons with disabilities in the world will have a better future with respect to the enjoyment of all their human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with all others.

In recent years, considerable progress has been achieved in many parts of the world in abolishing the death penalty which is a cruel and inhuman punishment. Its abolition contributes to the enhancement of human dignity and the progressive codification of human rights law. In conjunction with this, it should be emphasized that terrorism can be combated most effectively by adhering strictly to international law and respect for human rights. I would like, therefore, to express the hope that very soon, more countries will sign the *December 2006 Declaration for the Abolition of Death Penalty*.

Cyprus, as a country whose priority lies in upholding the rule of law and the full respect for human rights, would like to see the HRC fulfill its mandate and lead to human rights improvements on the ground. We also encourage and support the active involvement of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, including its monitoring and reporting on a universal basis.

Mr. President,

Over the years, numerous resolutions and decisions have been adopted by international organizations and bodies, on the ongoing violation of human rights in Cyprus, as a result of the 1974 invasion and continuing military occupation of 37% of its territory. These resolutions and decisions remain unimplemented. The people of Cyprus are victims of violations of human rights, a fact which has been

established by a plethora of UN resolutions and several times by the European Court of Human Rights.

Specifically, the European Court of Human Rights in its judgment of 10/5/2001, in the case *Cyprus V. Turkey*, held that there were massive and grave violations of 14 of the Articles of the European Convention on Human Rights as concerns the missing persons and their relatives, the home and property rights of displaced persons and the living conditions of Greek-Cypriots in the Karpas peninsula of northern part of Cyprus. The judgment, stressed that the violations entailed Turkey's responsibility under the Convention, given that Turkey exercises overall effective control over the occupied part of Cyprus and is, therefore, responsible for all the acts committed either by her own troops or by its subordinate local administration.

In connection to this issue, is the implantation of approximately 160.000 Turkish settlers who have been brought from Turkey in the occupied area, in order to change the demographic composition of the island. The transfer by an occupying power of its population to the area it occupies is considered a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions, and a war crime as stipulated also in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

With respect to the question of the determination of the fate of missing persons, though we have recently witnessed some small encouraging developments, the

Committee of Missing Persons holds Turkey responsible *“to envisage the necessary measures, further to its contribution to the work of CMP, so that the effective investigation required by the Court’s judgment can be conducted as soon as possible”*, as stressed in the Interim Resolution of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe of 7 June 2005.

Any settlement of the Cyprus Question must naturally be based on international law, the relevant United Nations Resolutions, the European Union principles and the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights. Full conformity with individual human rights standards for the people of Cyprus as a whole, regardless of their race or religion, should be an integral element of any comprehensive, functional and sustainable solution to the Cyprus Question.

My Government stands ready and does its utmost for the resumption of meaningful negotiations in the framework of the good offices mission of the Secretary-General for a just, viable and lasting settlement of the Cyprus Question.

In conclusion, I express our expectation that the HRC while avoiding the deficiencies of the Commission on Human Rights, will, nonetheless, build on its achievements, and be able to fulfill its mandate responsibly and effectively. Towards, this end, we should all work together in an effective manner in order to make sure that this new body will be able to continue its work, and significantly

strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights throughout the world,
hence turning our expectations into reality.