

**Address by the Republic of Cyprus at the High- Level Segment
of the 52nd Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs,
Vienna, 11-12 March 2009**

Thank you, Madame Chair,

Dear Colleagues, Excellencies,

1. It gives me a great pleasure to be addressing the High Level Segment of the 52nd Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, today. On behalf of my government I wish to extend to you, Madam Chair my congratulations for your able work in steering the preparations for the High Level Segment of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, as well as the regular session of the Commission.
2. I would like to note that the Republic of Cyprus fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Czech Republic on behalf of the EU.
3. My country believes that it is very important to recognise the progress made since the 1998 United Nations General Assembly Special Session, when UN Member States unanimously committed to address the world drug situation by setting clear objectives to reduce drug demand and drug supply. At the same time, we must acknowledge that new challenges have arisen during these past ten years which require our joined responses.
4. I would like to present briefly the drug situation in my country. The National Annual Report shows that cannabis is the most widely used illicit substance among the general population, particularly among young people. However, heroin continues to be the most commonly reported primary drug among those seeking treatment. Opioids and especially heroin seems to be the main reason for the majority of drug-related

deaths. Also, the number of drug related deaths in Cyprus, (in proportion to the country's population) exceeds the average of the European Union. Another worrying fact is the increase of intravenous drug users who are found positive for Hepatitis C.

5. Our concern about the drug problem and the political commitment to tackle it in a global and multidimensional way, has found expression in the enactment of the Law on the Prevention of the Use and Spread of Narcotic Drugs and Other Addictive Substances. Under this Law the Cyprus Antidrug Council was established as the supreme coordinating body in the field of addictive substances, both licit and illicit, and is thus responsible for the coordination of governmental as well as non-governmental prevention and treatment programmes.
6. The first National Drug Strategy 2004-2008, which was based on the European Union Drug Strategy and the relevant United Nations Conventions, was recently evaluated and led to the second National Drug Strategy for the period 2009-2012. The National Drug Strategy reflects the importance of a global, integrated and holistic approach, incorporating all aspects relating to Demand Reduction, including prevention, treatment, harm reduction and social integration as well as Supply Reduction and international cooperation.
7. Regarding prevention activities in Cyprus, they are carried out at the universal, selective and indicated level with the aim to prevent drug consumption and its negative consequences for health and social integration, following a comprehensive approach that will not focus only on illicit drugs but that will give a special attention to other legal substances, such as alcohol and tobacco.

8. The goal of the National Drug Strategy is to ensure that each citizen has access to all treatment and social reintegration services, based on the principles of universal care and free access to treatment. Treatment and social reintegration programmes will be based on a multidisciplinary approach, ensuring the provision of professional treatment to individuals regardless their age, gender, nationality or drug of choice.
9. Additionally, harm reduction was included in the new National Drug Strategy as a separate pillar. The introduction of harm reduction measures, such as substitution treatment and needle exchange programmes, is expected to significantly reduce the risks related to drug use not only for the users but also for society in general.
10. As regards Supply Reduction, the Drug Law Enforcement Unit of the Cyprus Police is in charge of the fight of the illicit production and supply of drugs with the support of Europol and other structures of the EU.
11. Cyprus is an island located in the South Eastern Mediterranean Sea between three continents, Africa, Asia and Europe, with no land borders. Its main threat regarding drug import is by air, by sea and from the area not under the effective control of the Republic of Cyprus.
12. In the last few years there has been an increase in drug seizures, with cannabis being the most common substance seized. Cannabis is mainly imported from western EU countries by air and carried by couriers who then travel on to other European destinations. As far as heroin is concerned, it is trafficked mainly through the non Government controlled areas of the Republic.

13. The Drug Law Enforcement Unit of the Cyprus Police has created sub-branches in the airports and ports, and has increased checks along the cease fire line crossing points.

14. On the international scene, the Cyprus Police cooperates with foreign liaison officers stationed in Cyprus and in neighboring countries, participates in Europol's projects such as Cospol Project Cocaine, makes use of the mechanisms of Europol and Eurojust, as well as other structures of the E.U.

15. I wish to conclude this address by reaffirming my Government's determination and commitment to work both at a national and international level towards overcoming the world drug problem and to implement effectively the Political Declaration and its Plan of Action.

Thank you Madame Chairperson.