



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

**Information received from Cyprus on follow-up to the
concluding observations on its eighth periodic report***

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



I. Introduction

1. The present document provides information on the steps undertaken by the Republic of Cyprus to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 11 (c), 19 (d), 27 (b) and 39 (c) of the concluding observations on the 8th Periodic Report of Cyprus (2018), ([CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8](#)), pursuant to paragraph 55, thereof, hereinafter the “concluding observations”.

2. Like the 8th Periodic Report (2017) ([CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8](#)), hereinafter the “Periodic Report” and the replies of Cyprus to the list of issues in connection with the consideration of its Periodic Report (2017) ([CEDAW/C/CYP/Q/8/Add.1](#)), the present document was prepared by the Law Commissioner of the Republic who pursuant to a Decision of the Council of Ministers, is entrusted with ensuring compliance of Cyprus’ reporting obligations under the international human rights instruments. All the information for the preparation of the present document was provided by the Ministry of Justice and Public Order (MJPO), as the competent Ministry for the purposes of the CEDAW, through the National Machinery for Women’s Rights, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Commissioner of Gender Equality (CGE), having competence for the specific information needed (i.e. women and peace and security). The Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance and the Ministry of Interior was also consulted of specific matters (i.e. migrant women domestic workers).

II. Follow-up information

Women and peace and security

A. Follow-up information relating to paragraph 11 (c) of the concluding observations ([CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/8](#))

3. While the Republic of Cyprus is the subject of international law that assumes obligations pursuant to UN Security Council Resolutions, it does not itself participate in the negotiations, which are conducted between the two communities of Cyprus (see Track I below). The Cyprus Government participates in the negotiations when it comes to discussing relevant international treaties to which it is a party, along with other states which are parties to the same treaties. Women are omnipresent in all tracks of the peace process in Cyprus and are in fact responsible for much of the body of work produced towards the resolution of the Cyprus problem. The participation of women in the Cyprus peace process can be traced back to its early stages and has been continuous ever since.

4. The peace process comprises of Track I and Track II activities. Track I concerns the actual negotiation for the settlement of the Cyprus conflict, which takes place between leaders of the two communities, with the facilitation of the UN, in the framework of the UN good offices mission in Cyprus. Track II includes a number of actions that contribute to daily management of the conflict and conflict mitigation, stability, peacemaking, and dialogue between the two largely segregated communities. These notably include a number of confidence-building measures (CBMs); the work of the Technical Committees (established in 2006 in order to enable the resumption of the peace process, covering a wide spectrum of issues, such as health, environment, crime, protection of cultural property, education, crisis management, culture. Their composition is bi-communal and their mandate is to facilitate the daily lives of people while the status quo persists).

5. Concerning participation of women in the Track I process, it is worth noting that in the latest round of negotiations, which commenced in late 2013, a significant number of women have participated at all Track I levels (leaders, negotiators, expert working groups). In addition, the gender perspective has received increasing attention in this round as a substantive matter, with discussions having taken place on possible provisions in the settlement regarding, inter alia, quotas for elected women parliamentarians.

6. Regarding participation of women in Track II process activities, it is noted that women take part both in the decision-making process and the implementation of Confidence-building measures; serve as members and or/heads of the Technical Committees; participate in the regular dialogue between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot political parties, facilitated by the Embassy of Slovakia in Cyprus. In addition, they are actively involved in policies related to the humanitarian track of the peace process, comprising the work of the Committee on Missing Persons and the policies of supporting the enclaved persons, that is, a small number of Greek Cypriot civilians residing in the occupied part of Cyprus. Further, they participate actively in the facilitation of the work of the Religious track of the Cyprus peace process (established in 2011 under the auspices of the Embassy of Sweden in Cyprus, comprising all religious leaders of Cyprus, with the aim of working together to support human rights, peace, reconciliation, and the Cyprus peace talks). Special mention should be made of the participation of civil society in the Track II process. After the conflict erupted, women's groups were the first to launch bi-communal meetings, discussions and activities demanding peace, reconciliation and reunification. These initiatives led the way and have now transformed into broader bi-communal civil society involvement that actively supports and contributes to reunification, brings the two communities closer together, and reduces prejudices through increased people to people contacts.

National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

7. Recognizing the importance of the United Nations Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and the subsequent Resolutions, the Republic of Cyprus proceeded to draw up the first National Action Plan (NAP) for the full implementation of Resolution 1325.

8. More specifically, the CGE has undertaken, in close co-operation with civil society, to draft the first NAP on the implementation of the Security Council Resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), covering the period 2020–2024, which will ensure the full implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. It consists of four main pillars: (a) Participation and Empowerment; (b) Protection; (c) Prevention; and (d) Promoting and informing civil society about the aforementioned Resolution and is expected to be concluded and adopted by the Council of Ministers by the end of the year.

9. The NAP was drawn up on the basis of a broad cooperation and consultation based on the following procedure. The plan was devised in close cooperation with all relevant government departments, women's organizations and other NGOs, academic institutions and human rights organizations. The Concluding Comments of the CEDAW Committee (2018) and the UN Secretary General Comments for Cyprus on the agenda "Women, Peace and Security" were taken seriously into account.

10. The CGE initially informed all relevant Ministries/Departments, political/trade unions and non-governmental organizations and civil society in general to initiate the process of drafting the NAP while inviting them to actively participate in and contribute to it.

11. This was followed by a wide-ranging consultation before the draft was drawn up with all the above-mentioned bodies, while after the completion of the first draft in the framework of an open process that lasted one month, the document was published and put to a wide public consultation. During the public consultation, all opinions/suggestions were recorded, processed and incorporated accordingly.

National machinery for the advancement of women

B. Follow-up information relating to paragraph 19 (d) of the concluding observations

12. The new National Action Plan on Equality between Women and Men (NAPEBWM) 2019–2023 has been prepared and approved by the Council of Ministers (September 2019), as a project of close collaboration between the Government, the CGE, local authorities, women’s organizations, NGOs, academic institutions and human rights bodies.

13. The NAPEBWM was formulated on the basis of international conventions and recommendations, particularly the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its latest Concluding Comments, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 2013 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as EU policy frameworks.

14. The Action Plan, which is the most significant achievement in terms of the national policy on gender equality, includes the following seven thematic areas:

- Combating all forms of violence against women and gradual implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (“Istanbul Convention”);
- Promoting balanced participation between women and men in decision-making positions in public, political, social and economic life;
- Modernizing/Improving the legislative framework;
- Protecting and Empowering Vulnerable Groups of Women;
- Promoting equality between men and women in employment;
- Eliminating Gender Stereotypes and Social Prejudices and;
- Educating and Training Women in Information and Communication Technologies.

15. In accordance with the Council of Ministers Decision, by which the NAPEBWM was approved, all jointly responsible Ministries, public bodies, academic and research centres, non-governmental organisations, Women’s Organisations, equality organisations, and local authorities are called upon to implement the actions and measures pertaining to their spheres of influence. The ultimate aim is to promote and consolidate a culture of equality, eliminating social stereotypes and prejudices.

Gender Mainstreaming

16. Cyprus recognizes that gender mainstreaming is an instrumental strategy towards realizing substantial equality between women and men. Gender mainstreaming involves integrating a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, measures and programmes, with a view to promoting gender equality and combating discrimination.

17. In this regard, the implementation of gender mainstreaming has been included in the new NAPBMW 2019–2023, along with numerous other actions, and is closely monitored by a Committee consisting of representatives of all relevant stakeholders.

18. Besides this, pursuant to a decision of the Council of Ministers, there is a specific obligation for evaluating and certifying that proposals for projects funded by the Structural Funds of the European Union comply fully with national and EU legislation on gender equality. Further, it is mandatory for each Ministry to complete a questionnaire that includes a discussion of likely social impacts for all bills presented to parliament. The questionnaire is entitled “Questionnaire for analysis of impact on all proposed legislation” and included amongst its main headings is the heading “Impacts on gender Equality”.

19. Moreover, a recently established Steering Group has focused its work on the preparation of an Action Plan for the training of public officers on Gender Mainstreaming, as well as the design of educational programs aimed at government officials at all levels and competent officers who prepare and implement the State budget and the strategic development plans on gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting questions. A Manual on gender mainstreaming in public policies has been prepared and adopted by the Council of Ministers.

20. Having recognised the benefits and the added value of the implementation of gender mainstreaming, a woman has been appointed as an Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, whose mandate, inter alia, includes; (a) the implementation of specific actions and initiatives within the framework of the foreign policy of the Republic of Cyprus, on issues related to the advancement of women’s rights and gender equality; (b) the engagement and development of collaborations with civil society in the promotion of women’s rights and gender equality in foreign policy; (c) drafting, designing, planning and evaluating the Policy Framework of Action related to mainstream gender in foreign policy of the Republic of Cyprus and (d) promoting the institutional strategy towards equality between women and men and the integration of the gender dimension within the MFA.

21. Since the appointment of the Gender Advisor a number of activities have taken place, including:

- Financial contribution to UN Institutions as these related to the advancement of women rights Financial contributions to neighboring countries in relation women and girls’ education, sexual, reproductive, health and rights;
- Actively and substantially contributing on women’s and girls’ rights on international/regional/European discussions, including on joint statements, recommendations and resolutions;
- Organizing different events such as international conferences on issues related to for example “Women in Diplomacy”, meetings with civil society organizations on the impact of Covid-19 on women and girls and the role of the international community;
- The organization of internal trainings on mainstreaming gender in foreign policy including on the implementation of (1325) resolution: Women, Peace and Security.

Gender-based violence against women

C. Follow-up information relating to paragraph 27 (b) of the concluding observations

22. The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) was ratified by the Government of Cyprus in November 2017.

23. The MJPO has drafted a specific law in order to transpose the provisions of the Convention into the national legal order. The new national law has been submitted to the Attorney-General's Office for legal vetting. The issue is still pending due to legal matters that occurred.

24. It is noteworthy that, although there is no special law pertaining to violence against women in Cyprus, most forms of violence against women are already criminalised. Domestic violence was criminalised with the laws pertaining to violence within the family (prevention and protection of victims) which were adopted in 2000 and were amended up to 2019. Sexual offences, including rape, are punished with a life sentence being the highest consequence. Marital rape is also recognised as a criminal offence. Other forms of violence, such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation are also criminal offences.

25. Furthermore, following their invitation, it has recently been requested of the Council of Europe to provide us with technical support and guidance in matters pertaining to the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. During its contacts with advisors from the Council of Europe, Cyprus is expected to request guidance for the process of removing obstacles that have arisen and which are delaying the legal vetting from completion.

26. However, the fact that the Convention has not yet been transposed into national law, does not impede the promotion of various policy measures for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention.

27. As part of the implementation of the obligations under the Istanbul Convention, on 27.11.2019 the Council of Ministers of Cyprus approved the operation of a "Woman's House" (WH) which will function as a crisis center for women victims of violence and their children. In fact, it will serve as an interdisciplinary centre, where professionals from various disciplines and state officials such as Clinical Psychologists, Social Workers, specially trained Police Officers will work under the same roof to provide appropriate support and treatment to women who are victims of violence. Victims of violence will be referred to the House by the Social Welfare Services, the Police and non-governmental organizations, or other State agencies as well as directly by the victims themselves and their families. It is important to note that the WH will provide services to migrant women on the principle of non-discrimination, regardless of their migrant/legal status. The administration of the WH is assigned by the government to the NGO, Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (APHVF).

28. The Advisory Committee for the Prevention & Combating of Violence in the Family (ACPCVF) was appointed by the Council of Ministers, as the Coordinator for the issue.

29. The WH is based on the European Model Family Justice Centre (FJC), and will operate as a 'one-stop-shop' providing integrated services for victims of violence against women. WH's vision is to protect and support all women (and their minor children) as well as girls (under the age of 18) who are victims of violence. The mission of the WH is to provide security, protection, support and empowerment for

victims of violence against women and girls through quality, specialized, accessible and coordinated multidisciplinary approach services, all under one roof.

30. Specifically, the WH will provide the following services:

- Protective measures (regarding the victim and the perpetrator) for the immediate protection and safety of the victim;
- Immediate/short-term psychological support and referral to the Mental Health Services/NGO for long-term treatment and follow-up;
- Socio-economic support (access to benefits, housing, care services, referral to labour market reintegration services – e.g. Employment Office);
- Medical examination for physical and sexual abuse and referral to specialists of the General Health System for long-term treatment and medical care. In case of sexual abuse of a minor, a referral will be made to the Child’s House;
- Provision of the victim’s testimony, as well as a video-recorded testimony by the Police in cooperation with the competent local Police Stations or the Crime Scene Investigation;
- Referral and/or escort services – if required – at the Shelter/housing services, the Police, the Court, Hospitals, Mental Health Services, the Welfare Services, child support and protection Agencies, etc;
- Legal services (free legal aid, etc).

31. A step forward in the right direction was also the signing of bilateral cooperation protocol between the MJPO and the APHDV. The Association runs a 24-hour telephone helpline for women victims of violence, funded by the MJPO. In addition, the Police has adopted a special Risk Assessment Protocol for cases related to intimate partner violence. The protocol is used in cases of allegations of violence, involving (former) spouses, cohabitees or partners.

32. The Cyprus Police has also been making continuous and systematic efforts, aiming at higher levels of sensitivity, awareness and professionalism among police members handling cases of domestic violence. Within this framework, specialized training programmes are carried out, aimed at police members dealing with these issues, as well as newly recruited police officers. In the context of implementing the project, a police-training manual on violence against women has been drafted, with an emphasis on domestic violence.

Women migrant domestic workers

D. Follow-up information relating to paragraph 39 (c) of the concluding observations

33. Regarding the Committee’s general recommendation 23 (2008) for immigrant domestic workers mentioned in paragraph 39c and specifically the reinforcement of the right of domestic workers for legal change of employer, this right is ensured and safeguarded through their contract of employment.

34. In particular, paragraph 4 of the employment contract provides the preconditions for the legal termination of employment, as stated below.

35. The Contract of Employment may be terminated:

- (a) Upon a mutual agreement between the Employee and the Employer, provided that a release document is completed and signed by both parties, in the

presence of witnesses. The mutual termination of the contract may be done at any time after a mutual agreement. The release agreement allows the employee to search for employment for a period of one (1) month. During the aforementioned period the employee may stay and work at the house of his/her employer, unless there is a mutual agreement for immediate termination. In such a case the Employee shall be obliged to inform the District Aliens and Immigration Unit in respect to his/her temporary address;

(b) Upon a one-month (1) notice given by either party under the terms and conditions of the Termination of Employment Laws of 1967 to 2002, as these are amended from time to time. During the notice period, the Employer shall facilitate the Employee while searching for employment;

(c) Forthwith without notice, in accordance with section 5 of the Termination of Employment Law;

(d) Where the employee is absent from his work due to sick leave, which is not attributed to an accident covered under the Industrial Accidents Act, for more than one month. In such a case, the Employer shall have the right to terminate the employment of the Employee and to make arrangements for the Employee's repatriation if his/her state of health so permits. The Employer shall have no other obligations with regards to the Employee;

(e) In the case of a labour dispute between the Employee and the Employer. In such a case one of the two parties or both parties separately, may submit in writing a relevant complaint to the District Aliens and Immigration Unit of the Police, as well as the Department of Labour Relations for examination by the Labour Disputes Committee. In the case of criminal offences, all complaints shall be submitted to the Police Station of the area where the alien resides.

36. In reference to point (c), a further note is that up to three changes in employer are permitted, although pursuant to the decision of the Council of Ministers on 27/02/2020, more than three changes are permitted in cases where the employer is over 80 years old. Regarding the suitability of the accommodation, the Employer must complete the relevant field in the application, which is then signed.
