



International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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Summary record of the 3204th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Friday, 17 April 2026, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Kut

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports, comments and information submitted by States Parties under article 9 of the Convention *(continued)*

Twenty-fifth periodic report of Cyprus (continued) ([CERD/C/CYP/25](#); [CERD/C/CYP/Q/25](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Cyprus joined the meeting.*
2. **Ms. Shepherd** (Country Rapporteur), noting that the State Party report provided data on asylum applications and trafficking victims, said that she would be grateful if the delegation could also provide up-to-date statistical information on the number of stateless persons, migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers in the State Party, disaggregated by ethnicity, sex or gender, age and length of stay. She would also appreciate disaggregated data on naturalization applications and decisions since 2017. She would be interested to know when the State Party might ratify the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and what interim measures were in place to protect the rights of stateless persons.
3. Recalling that article 5 (e) (v) of the Convention guaranteed the right to education without discrimination, she said she would like to know whether the national action plan for the integration of third country nationals legally residing in Cyprus had been revised since 2017, what the action plan's key priorities were, and how it took the Committee's recommendations into account. Information on the action plan for the education of pupils with a migrant background for the period 2019–2022, including its goals, implementation status and outcomes, would be welcome.
4. She would also appreciate up-to-date information on the situation of permanent residents from non-European countries, including in relation to their access to housing, education, healthcare and other basic services, and on measures to ensure that they were not subjected to discrimination in the exercise of those rights.
5. In its previous concluding observations ([CERD/C/CYP/CO/23-24](#)), the Committee had expressed concern about insufficient access to services for asylum-seekers at the Kofinou reception centre. She wondered what improvements had been made at the centre, whether an increased range of services was provided and what the centre's capacity was. As the State Party report indicated that asylum-seekers were no longer detained solely because of the rejection of the application, she wished to know what alternatives to detention were used for asylum-seekers and migrants in an irregular situation. She would be grateful for information on the average length of detention and for confirmation that no unaccompanied children or families with children were detained.
6. More information might be provided on protection from refoulement and vulnerability assessment procedures for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, together with data on the number of asylum applications accepted or rejected and the number of appeals lodged, disaggregated by the applicant's country of origin. She wondered what mechanisms ensured that individuals were not returned to countries where they faced a real risk of torture, persecution or serious harm.
7. The Committee would be interested to receive additional information on the victims of trafficking who had been identified during the period 2016–2018, including the number of victims who had received protection and support services, the number whose cases had resulted in prosecutions and convictions, and the number who had received reparation or compensation. Up-to-date information on the number of trafficking victims and their countries of origin would be welcome. She would be glad to receive the latest national action plan against trafficking in human beings, perhaps accompanied by an explanation of how it addressed victims' needs in terms of access to housing, healthcare and legal remedies.
8. **A representative of Cyprus**, responding to a question raised at the previous meeting ([CERD/C/SR.3203](#)), said that the Government condemned all forms of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia in sport, including in football. Such conduct was addressed through the criminal justice framework and the disciplinary mechanisms of the sporting authorities. Public incitement to violence or hatred on grounds including race, colour, religion, descent and national or ethnic origin was a criminal offence.

9. **A representative of Cyprus** said that, in the case of the racist verbal abuse directed against the Beninese football player Mickaël Poté, the match had been interrupted and the alleged perpetrator removed from the stadium. The player had subsequently filed a complaint with the police. Given the serious nature of the allegation, the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman) had intervened, emphasizing that racism violated the fundamental principle of equality and that international and European standards required strong action. She had also called for the competent authorities to fully investigate the complaint and take immediate action, stressing that a zero-tolerance approach was essential to combat racism in sport and society.

10. **A representative of Cyprus** said that Law No. 48 of 2008 on the Prevention and Suppression of Violence in Sports Venues criminalized acts including discrimination or insults directed at persons on the various grounds, including race, colour, religion, language and nationality. Article 72 of the Law provided that anyone who used racist or abusive slogans or symbols in a sports venue would be punishable by up to 6 months' imprisonment and/or a fine of up to €1,000.

11. When addressing issues of racial equality and anti-discrimination, the courts in Cyprus tended to refer to the European Union and Council of Europe legal frameworks, including the interpretations of the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights, while making less frequent reference to the Convention. References to the Convention in the jurisprudence of the regional courts contributed to the development of legal standards that could in turn inform and influence the practice of domestic courts.

12. **A representative of Cyprus** said that, between 2017 and 2022, Cyprus had experienced a period of acute asylum pressure, culminating in 21,500 new asylum applicants in 2022 alone. Since then, new applications had declined sharply, allowing operational focus to shift to the resolution of accumulated caseloads. Between 2019 and March 2026, the Asylum Service had issued 91,941 first instance decisions, of which 13,391 had been positive, meaning that international protection had been granted. In 2024, 3,794 individuals had been granted international protection. Of the 15,196 pending cases in March 2026, two thirds related to applications by Syrian nationals, with the other pending applications submitted by nationals of Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iran, Somalia, the Sudan and other countries. The Asylum Service was working to systematically reduce the backlog, with a focus on procedural quality, timeliness and durable solutions. Throughout the period of high migration pressure, the Government had continued to examine claims individually, while upholding the principle of non-refoulement and cooperating closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international partners.

13. In recent years, all reception centres in Cyprus had been upgraded or renovated. The Pournara reception centre had been upgraded with European funding and could now host 1,240 residents and an additional 934 in cases of emergency. The Kofinou reception centre had been upgraded and its capacity increased from 450 to 750 residents. A new reception centre in the area of Limnes, with the capacity to host 1,000 asylum-seekers, was due to be completed in September 2026, replacing Menoyia Detention Centre.

14. Cyprus was a Party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto. The Refugee Law had been adopted in 2000 and responsibility for refugee status determination transferred from UNHCR to the Government on 1 January 2022. Cyprus respected all provisions of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, including article 33, which prohibited the return of persons to the frontiers of territories where their lives or freedom would be threatened. All persons residing in Cyprus were therefore protected from refoulement, including asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, whose claims were examined individually in the light of up-to-date information on their countries of origin.

15. **A representative of Cyprus** said that, with regard to the question raised at the previous meeting concerning the incidents in Chloraka, a number of police investigations had been launched and one case was pending trial. The case of the bomb attack on the non-governmental organization (NGO) Action for Support, Equality and Anti-Racism (KISA) had been sent for trial and a hearing was scheduled for 21 May 2026.

16. Since 2022, relevant police departments had strived to improve conditions of detention in all 28 police detention centres. Cells were of satisfactory size and were equipped with sanitary facilities, windows, lighting, a call bell system and air conditioning. Fifteen detention centres had been renovated, and three additional police stations with detention facilities had become operational in 2023 and 2024. In 2023, an inspection committee had been set up with a mandate to visit all police detention facilities in order to improve the living conditions of detainees; identify weaknesses in building infrastructure, security and human rights protection; submit recommendations for corrective measures to the police leadership; and promote and monitor the implementation of recommendations. In 2025, a new contract had been signed with a private company for the cleaning and the disinfection of police detention facilities. All detainees were provided with personal hygiene items and blankets, pillows and bed linen, and they received three meals a day.

17. The facility under construction in Limnes, which had partially opened in March 2026, was compliant with international and European standards for the detention of administrative detainees, taking into consideration the recommendations of relevant organizations on matters such as material conditions, visits by relatives, friends, lawyers and NGOs and access to various services. Detainees were not locked in their rooms and had access to common areas at all times. They also enjoyed access to outdoor activities for three hours a day. Healthcare services were provided by a doctor on a daily basis, a general nurse available 24 hours a day, a mental health nurse available daily and a visiting public health nurse once a week. Detainees underwent medical screening upon admission and could be transferred to the regional medical centre or Larnaca General Hospital for treatment if necessary.

18. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the Social Welfare Services took measures for the reception and integration of asylum-seekers and provided material reception conditions (accommodation, food, clothing and a daily allowance) for those who could not be accommodated in reception centres run by the Deputy Ministry of Migration and International Protection. High priority was given to vulnerable people and families with children at risk. Application forms for the provision of material reception conditions, together with information on the rights and obligations of applicants, had been developed and translated into six languages. The Social Welfare Services responded immediately in cases where asylum-seekers could not find accommodation and faced a situation of homelessness. In 2020, the Council of Ministers had decided to cover the living expenses of families with children and vulnerable applicants, with temporary accommodation provided for up to three months. Between 2023 and 2025, the amount allocated to providing material reception conditions had fallen from €32.4 million to €16.4 million owing to a decrease in the number of applicants. The Social Welfare Services were implementing a project under which staff assigned to the Pournara reception centre assisted asylum-seekers in applying for the provision of material reception conditions, thus reducing delays in the provision of benefits.

19. The Social Welfare Services, in cooperation with NGOs, provided immediate support and assistance to all victims of trafficking. The aim was to provide all necessary services on a non-discriminatory basis in order to assist victims with their reintegration and to protect them from revictimization. As the first responding authority, the Social Welfare Services had introduced a standard referral form in 2019 to improve identification and referral and data collection. In January 2022, the police and the Social Welfare Services had signed a memorandum of cooperation for the referral, handling and protection of potential and recognized victims of trafficking.

20. **A representative of Cyprus** said that asylum-seekers were granted access to the labour market nine months after the submission of their application but were permitted to work only in specific sectors and occupations. Access was determined on the basis of labour market conditions, including unemployment levels and skill needs and was largely limited to sectors that faced a shortage of Cypriot and European Union workers. The Government's policy was subject to regular revision, with the gradual inclusion of additional occupations.

Employers that wished to hire an asylum-seeker were required to submit an application to the Department of Labour.

21. The Government had established a comprehensive framework for the employment of non-European Union citizens, which ensured that they enjoyed working conditions equal to those of European Union citizens, including in terms of pay and working hours. The framework set out clear obligations for employers, strengthened monitoring and enforcement and aimed to prevent exploitation and promote decent formal employment for all. Effective procedures allowed workers to lodge complaints against their employers without fear of arrest or deportation. Non-European Union citizens who wished to submit a complaint could do so by writing to the Aliens and Immigration Unit of the police, which would forward the complaint to the relevant district office of the Department of Labour Relations of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. The employer and the employee would then be invited to a meeting with a view to resolving the complaint. If the complaint could not be resolved, the examining officer would submit a report to the Deputy Ministry of Migration and International Protection for appropriate action. Depending on the allegations, complaints could be forwarded to other authorities for investigation.

22. In accordance with the Private Employment Agencies Laws and Regulations, the Department of Labour inspected private employment agencies at least once a year in order to prevent the trafficking and exploitation of workers. During 2025, the Department had inspected 251 private employment agencies, revoked the licences of 21 agencies that had broken the law and imposed administrative fines on two agencies found to be involved in fraudulent practices.

23. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the general healthcare system was designed to ensure equitable and non-discriminatory access to healthcare services. Eligible residents, including third country nationals, refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection received comprehensive health coverage under the same conditions as citizens. Under the General Healthcare System Law, third country nationals qualified for coverage if they were ordinarily resident in government-controlled areas and met specific conditions, including permanent residence, entitlement to equal treatment in social security and refugee or subsidiary protection status under the Refugee Law. Asylum-seekers had access to free public healthcare services while their applications were being examined, and emergency healthcare was available to all persons without discrimination. Trafficking victims received free public healthcare services and psychological support at the “Women’s House” crisis centre for women victims of violence and their children.

24. **Mr. Sibande** (Country Task Force) said he was concerned that the concept of a “prohibited immigrant” in Cypriot law could be used to bypass regular asylum processing and lead to expedited removal. He would be interested to know what steps were being taken to amend the law to ensure that the concept was not applicable to asylum-seekers who were lawfully awaiting a decision on their application.

25. Cyprus had faced criticism from the European Court of Human Rights for denying refugees access to asylum procedure and returning them to countries where they faced prosecution. In 2025, several boats had been intercepted and over 160 Syrian nationals returned to the Syrian Arab Republic without due regard for the principle of non-refoulement. Some individuals had been arrested by armed security personnel upon their return. The Committee would like to know what steps had been taken by the Cypriot authorities to end the practice of refoulement and collective expulsion.

26. **Ms. Shepherd**, observing that football clubs could be fined up to €500,000 for the racist conduct of their fans, said she would like to know whether such fines were considered an effective deterrent. She would be interested to know to what extent education had been used to foster children’s intercultural understanding and tolerance, in line with the Committee’s general recommendation No. 34 on racial discrimination against people of African descent. She wondered whether the public was aware that many sex workers of African descent were victims of trafficking and how the education system was being mobilized to dispel stereotypes and other forms of discrimination against people of African descent. She was curious to know whether the Government had evaluated its education policies and what their impact on social attitudes and behaviours had been.

27. **Ms. Stavrinaki**, drawing attention to the Committee's general recommendation No. 37 on equality and freedom from racial discrimination in the enjoyment of the right to health, said she wished to know what measures the Government had put in place to ensure that the health service respected the principle of informed consent and provided women and girls – particularly those from racialized groups – with access to the information they needed to make informed decisions and to avoid serious violations of their rights.

28. **Ms. Esseneme**, noting that persons might be trafficked for purposes other than sexual or labour exploitation, such as organ removal, illegal adoption, forced begging and forced criminality, said that she would be grateful if the delegation could provide up-to-date statistics and other information on victims of trafficking, disaggregated by country of origin and purpose of trafficking. She would also welcome information on measures taken to identify victims, punish perpetrators and provide redress for harm suffered.

29. **Mr. Diaby** said that, as Cyprus was not a Party to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons or the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, he was concerned that such persons faced restrictions in their freedom of movement and access to identity documents, employment and basic services. He would therefore appreciate further information on measures to address the situation of stateless persons.

30. **A representative of Cyprus** said that information on the timeline for ratification of the statelessness conventions would be provided to the Committee. Under Cypriot law, stateless persons were recognized as refugees or persons granted subsidiary protection status by a decision of the Supreme Court, and therefore their fundamental rights were protected. Stateless persons enjoyed the right to move freely in the area under effective government control and they received access to education, employment and free medical care. Nationality legislation was applied in a non-discriminatory manner. Applications were examined according to the date of filing, and decisions were issued within a reasonable period of time.

31. **A representative of Cyprus** said that various categories of residence permits were granted to third country nationals in keeping with a carefully balanced immigration policy that supported the country's economic development. A significant proportion were issued for the purpose of employment in domestic service or the care sector. Family unity was also reflected in the granting of residence permits to family members of Cypriots, European Union citizens, third country nationals and beneficiaries of international protection. Permits were also granted to international students, who contributed to academic life and cultural exchange.

32. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the main responsibilities of the Office for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, which had been operational since 2015, were the identification and handling of victims and the investigation of criminal cases. In 2019, Cyprus had amended its legislation to criminalize the receiving of services from a victim of trafficking, with the relevant provision stating that persons who used the services of a victim of trafficking might not plead ignorance as a defence. The authorities had secured 22 convictions for trafficking offences, including the conviction of an individual who had received sexual services from a victim of sexual exploitation.

33. Since 2021, training had been provided for staff of the Office, front-line police officers, social workers, labour inspectors, prosecutors, clinical psychologists and other government officials. As most trafficking victims were foreign nationals, the police maintained close contacts with the authorities in countries of origin through the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (EUROPOL) and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), as well as providing mutual legal assistance. It also collected and maintained statistics on convictions, forms of exploitation and the countries of origin of victims and perpetrators.

34. During interviews, potential victims were informed about their rights, the available forms of protection and support, the possibility of filing a complaint and legal advice and compensation. If necessary, they could be admitted to a government- or NGO-run shelter. In the context of court proceedings, victims were referred to clinical psychologists for assessment. Victims who hesitated to cooperate with the authorities were granted a reflection period of one month. Criminal investigations were accompanied by financial investigations with the aim of seizing the proceeds of trafficking.

35. Challenges included the lengthy nature of investigations and trial proceedings and the need for interpretation services. The police cooperated with various international and European organizations in investigations, training and other projects. Two joint investigation teams had been set up with the authorities of other countries to look into sham marriages. In 2020, the police had introduced a victim-centred, multidisciplinary approach that had enhanced its procedure, resulting in an increased number of convictions. Thirty-three sexual and labour exploitation cases were pending before the courts. A hotline and online platform had been set up to enable anonymous reporting, and a specially designed facility provided a safe space for victims to attend interviews and give testimony.

36. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth had overhauled its policy on the integration of pupils with migrant backgrounds so that it focused on five priority areas: Greek language learning; reception of newly arrived children; training of teachers; collection and analysis of data on the needs of pupils; and the intercultural approach of new curricula. Based on that policy, action plans had been developed and implemented. During the current school year, extra teaching hours had been allocated and 184 additional teachers employed to teach Greek to kindergarten and primary school pupils. In September 2024, the Department of Primary Education had completed a project on the development of interactive, audiovisual and translated materials for the teaching of Greek as a second language in kindergartens. In secondary education, four educational programmes for the teaching of Greek to pupils with migrant backgrounds had been implemented in selected schools.

37. Anti-racism education and the promotion of equality and respect were integrated into the curricula of various school subjects, including history, religious education, language and literature. Education had a crucial role in challenging and dismantling harmful stereotypes about people of African descent. Schools countered one-dimensional narratives and promoted a better understanding of diversity through inclusive, evidence-based curricula that promoted critical thinking. Teachers were trained to recognize and address bias, to use respectful language and to respond effectively to racism. Such measures were expected to have a wider long-term impact by producing adult citizens who were more likely to challenge prejudice and reject discriminatory behaviour, shaping a society that was more inclusive, cohesive and resilient to racism and xenophobia.

38. **A representative of Cyprus** said that, under the general healthcare system, gynaecological clinics, midwives and maternity centres provided free services and counselling to everyone. The strategy on sexual and reproductive health and rights of youth 2018–2025 had covered subjects such as family planning, infertility, birth control, adverse pregnancy outcomes, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and the prevention and management of cases of sexual violence. That strategy had concluded and an ongoing evaluation would guide next steps.

39. **A representative of Cyprus** said that section 109 of the Civil Registry Law provided that any person born in Cyprus on or after 16 August 1960 was a citizen of the Republic, if at the time of his birth either of his parents was a citizen of the Republic. That provision did not apply in cases where the entry or stay in Cyprus of either parent was irregular, unless the Supreme Court decided otherwise on the basis of specific criteria.

The meeting was suspended at 11.30 a.m. and resumed at 11.35 a.m.

40. **Mr. Sibande** said that, in the light of reports that trafficked persons working in the sex industry had been detained and prosecuted, he wished to know how the State Party's legal and policy framework ensured that victims of trafficking were not revictimized but provided with protection and support. He wondered what policies and programmes were in place to address trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation in the agriculture, construction and manufacturing sectors. He would be grateful for statistics on the number of asylum applications received and accepted or rejected, disaggregated by the applicants' country of origin.

41. The Committee understood that, despite Security Council resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984), which affirmed the territorial integrity of Cyprus, the Government could not monitor or guarantee the enjoyment of Convention rights in areas not under its control. In that regard, the Committee aligned itself with the Committee on Economic, Social and

Cultural Rights, which in its concluding observations of 2024 (E/C.12/CYP/CO/7) had reminded the State Party that the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was applicable throughout its territory and that it should take all possible measures to implement the Covenant in all parts of the country.

42. Crossing points in the buffer zone between north and south were heavily controlled and their use was subject to changes in regulations. While holders of valid Republic of Cyprus or European Union identity documents were allowed to cross with little hindrance, holders of Turkish Cypriot documents reportedly faced greater scrutiny, including a requirement to present notarized copies of their documents. Foreign nationals who had arrived in northern Cyprus – for example, at Ercan airport – were often prohibited from crossing the buffer zone because they were considered to have entered the country illegally. Asylum-seekers attempting to enter the Republic of Cyprus had been stranded in the buffer zone. He wished to know how the Government ensured that people were not discriminated against at crossing points because they had used a point of entry in the north.

43. In its statement of 30 April 2003, the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus to the United Nations had stated that the Government aimed to give Turkish Cypriots who lived mainly in the occupied area the opportunity to enjoy, to the extent possible, the rights and benefits that the Republic of Cyprus offered its citizens. He would be interested to know what progress the State Party had made in implementing the practical measures outlined in that statement, namely: to facilitate the employment of Turkish Cypriots who lived in occupied areas by employers in the government-controlled area under the same terms that applied to other Cypriot employees; to employ qualified Turkish Cypriots on the basis of their substantive qualifications; to grant scholarships to Turkish Cypriots to attend courses in recognized higher education institutions; to teach the Turkish language to secondary education students and adults; to employ Turkish Cypriot teachers; to provide medical examination or treatment to Turkish Cypriot patients; and to upgrade the Turkish programmes of the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation.

44. The delegation might also comment on reports that children of mixed marriages involving Turkish Cypriots faced significant hurdles in obtaining citizenship, and on the reported lack of integration of Turkish Cypriots in the civil service, the police and the judiciary. The Committee would be interested to hear about the requirement to undergo Greek language proficiency tests and other forms of discrimination against Turkish Cypriots, including the limited use of the Turkish language in the provision of government services. It would be useful to know what had been done to facilitate the participation of Turkish Cypriot athletes in international sports events.

45. Notwithstanding the categorization of Roma people as members of the Turkish Cypriot community, it seemed that the 1,300 Roma in Cyprus identified themselves as a separate ethnic group, calling themselves the Kurbet. He would be grateful to receive recent data on that population, along with information on measures to address the high rates of poverty, low educational attainment, high unemployment and limited access to healthcare they reportedly faced. He would particularly welcome information on the State Party's Roma integration strategy in the area of education, including measures to reduce the school dropout rate and encourage progression to university. He wondered what had been done to improve housing conditions for Roma families, who often relied on government-provided homes, usually in rural settlements and often lacking in reliable access to water, electricity and sanitation.

46. Furthermore, the Committee would like to know what steps were being taken to promote and protect the rights of people of African descent and black Europeans, who were said to experience discrimination in many fields of life, including employment, healthcare and the criminal justice system, and hate speech and violence.

47. **A representative of Cyprus** said that, as a front-line State member of the European Union, Cyprus continued to face extraordinary challenges owing to the large number of migrants arriving in an irregular manner by sea. Nevertheless, the Government remained committed to its international obligations and did not conduct or join pushback operations in violation of international law. On the contrary, the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre effectively monitored the search and rescue area under its responsibility. The Centre's

mission was to coordinate search and rescue operations with a view to the timely identification and rescue of persons in distress, including migrants, as a result of maritime accidents.

48. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the authorities did not deport victims of trafficking under any circumstances. If the authorities believed that a victim of trafficking had entered Cyprus illegally, they would seek information on that person's arrival from the bicomunal technical committee on crime and criminal matters. Victims were informed from the outset about their right to legal assistance, regardless of whether they decided to cooperate in criminal proceedings; their right to apply for residence or international protection; and the right to claim compensation under the Anti-Trafficking Law.

49. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was not recognized as a sovereign State by any country other than Türkiye: the international community, including the United Nations and the European Union, considered the north of the island to be occupied territory of Cyprus. Immediately after the 1983 declaration of independence, the Security Council had passed resolution 541 (1983), considering the declaration to be legally invalid and calling for its withdrawal. Resolution 550 (1984) called on States not to recognize the purported State of the "Turkish Republic of North Cyprus" or to facilitate or in any way assist the entity. The European Court of Human Rights and other legal experts considered the so-called Turkish Republic of North Cyprus to be a puppet State effectively controlled by Türkiye, which maintained a large number of troops in the territory.

50. Owing to the 1974 military invasion and continuing occupation, the Government was not in a position to ensure the application of human rights instruments or the full realization of its laws, policies and programmes concerning human rights in the occupied part of the country. In addition, the application of European Union law (the *acquis*) was suspended in areas where the Government did not exercise effective control.

51. The movement of persons and goods between the occupied area and the area under effective government control was regulated by European Council Regulation No. 866/2004 (the "Green Line Regulation"). The buffer zone was not an external border but a temporary tool that had been put in place pending the resolution of the Cyprus problem. Since April 2003, several crossing points had opened, including two at the western end of the island that had reopened in November 2018. The Agios Dometios crossing point in Nicosia had recently been expanded to allow increased traffic, and staffing had been increased at all crossing points.

52. The legal entry points to Cyprus were the international airports of Larnaca and Paphos, the ports of Larnaca, Lasti, Limassol and Paphos and the marinas of Limassol, Limassol Sheraton and Agia Napia. Entry through any port or airport in the Turkish-occupied north was considered illegal and might lead to fines, prosecution or entry bans. The Government could not provide consular protection or guarantee safety in the areas under occupation.

53. Greek and Turkish were recognized as the official languages of the Republic of Cyprus under the Constitution. Arabic, spoken by the Maronite community, had been recognized as a minority language. The Latin community did not see themselves as different from the Greek Cypriot community, with whom they shared a common language. Government services websites provided information in Greek, Turkish and English, while Citizen Service Centres – which functioned as a one-stop shop for most public administration services and processes – employed Turkish-speaking Cypriot citizens.

54. Entrance examinations for the civil service and the judiciary were open to all citizens that met the relevant criteria, regardless of the community to which they belonged. Examination papers in the Turkish language were provided for the members of the Turkish Cypriot community who wished to join the foreign service.

55. A representative of Cyprus said that the Social Welfare Services provided emergency financial assistance and accommodation arrangements for victims of trafficking who were not accommodated in shelters. All victims were entitled to Guaranteed Minimum Income, which included rent allowance, and were provided with assistance in finding permanent accommodation.

56. According to the 2021 population and housing census, 243 Roma people were residing in areas under government control. The census had included a question that allowed respondents to identify themselves as Roma (Kurbet). Roma citizens of Cyprus enjoyed all rights and access to social welfare with no discrimination. In cooperation with the relevant services and agencies, the Government had established the National Roma Strategic Framework, which was due to be reviewed in 2026. The Social Welfare Services provided support for all people in need, including Roma. Roma families and individuals facing financial or housing difficulties could apply for Guaranteed Minimum Income.

57. **A representative of Cyprus** said that compulsory education from the age of 4 to 15 years constituted a guarantee of equal access to learning. The Government aimed to ensure that every child acquired the core knowledge, skills and values necessary for active participation in society, including respect for human dignity, equality and diversity. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth closely monitored school attendance and intervened where appropriate with a view to preventing early school leaving. Turkish Cypriot and Roma children, and those belonging to the Maronite, Armenian and Latin religious groups, could attend a public or a private school of their choice and, if they chose to attend a private school in the government-controlled area, their fees would be fully subsidized by the Government, which was not the case for Greek Cypriot children.

58. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth continued to take measures to meet the particular needs of Roma pupils enrolled in public schools. The two schools where Roma pupils were enrolled were implementing the Actions for School and Social Inclusion+ project, which included measures such as extra support for pupils in language and mathematics; teacher assistance in all classes; additional activities during and after school hours; teaching of Greek as a foreign language; projects and targeted activities to eliminate discrimination and social stereotypes and promote equality; teaching of Turkish language and history, Islam and social issues; teaching of the Kurbetcha language to pupils in primary education; active participation of Roma pupils in school events, including anti-racism initiatives; visits to local mosques to foster intercultural understanding; the provision of education at home for Roma pupils identified as being at high risk of school failure; and provision of free breakfast to Roma pupils. Turkish was an elective subject from the second grade of upper-secondary education. The two compulsory foreign languages in public schools in the government-controlled area were English and French.

59. The so-called universities operating in the area under Turkish military occupation had not been established under the laws of Cyprus, nor did they operate in accordance with those laws. Rather, they operated under the purported law of the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus; therefore, neither they nor the qualifications they awarded were recognized by Cyprus. Many of the so-called universities had been illegally built on property belonging to displaced Greek Cypriots who had fled their homes in 1974.

60. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the Roma community continued to enjoy the full and effective exercise of their right to work without discrimination, in line with article 5 of the Convention. Equal access to the labour market was ensured through the general legal and policy framework, which prohibited discrimination in employment and occupation. The Public Employment Service provided free services – including registration, job search assistance, job matching and placement, vocational guidance and counselling and referrals to vocational training programmes – to all jobseekers without discrimination on any grounds. Training, upskilling and reskilling opportunities were offered through national initiatives and European Union schemes.

61. **A representative of Cyprus** said that Roma persons who were European Union citizens or third country nationals legally resident in Cyprus were entitled to healthcare services on the same basis as other European Union citizens or third country nationals.

62. **Ms. Shepherd**, drawing attention to the Committee's general recommendation No. 34, said she would be interested to hear more about measures and policies to address gender-related dimensions of racial discrimination. Recalling that the State Party had gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1960, she said she would be interested to know how the education system dealt with the legacies of colonialism. In particular, she wondered whether the history curriculum had been expanded or changed with a view to preventing

stereotypes and discrimination against people of African descent, which in many countries was rooted in the history of colonialism.

63. **Mr. Sibande** said that he remained concerned about the discrimination and even prosecution of people who had used an entry point in the north. He would be interested to know what efforts were being made to open more crossing points and to ensure freedom of movement on the island.

64. In its report on the question of human rights in Cyprus ([A/HRC/61/21](#)), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that the Supreme Constitutional Court had in April 2025 rejected an appeal brought by a person born in Cyprus in 1978 to a Turkish Cypriot mother and a Turkish father, following the Administrative Court's decision to dismiss a challenge to the denial of her citizenship on the basis that her father had entered and resided illegally in the Republic of Cyprus. In the light of that judgment, he wished to know what efforts were being made to ensure that Turkish Cypriots enjoyed equal access to citizenship, as well as to employment, financial services and economic opportunities in Cyprus.

65. The Office had also reported that announcements of available services and job openings continued to be published only in Greek, which hindered access to services and language rights. He wondered what efforts were being made to ensure that such announcements were accessible to all.

66. **Mr. Balcerzak** said that, in its report on Cyprus, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance had observed that Turkish Cypriot Roma had the opportunity to learn Kurbetcha at the Agios Antonios primary school in Limassol and that, during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, significant efforts had been made to provide tablets and Internet access to all Roma pupils for online education. He wondered whether such good practices were applied throughout Cyprus or were confined to one particular school.

67. The Committee was grateful for the information that had been shared on the historical context of Cyprus and on recent developments. As 25 years had elapsed since the 2001 judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Cyprus v. Turkey*, he would be interested to hear the delegation's appraisal of the current state of peace and reconciliation efforts, given their impact on the overall human rights situation.

68. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that the history of Cyprus was a painful one. She would be interested to know what support was provided for intercommunal initiatives and other efforts to bring communities together. She wondered what steps had been taken to involve women in peace processes.

69. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the Government had exclusive jurisdiction to determine the legal entry points. It did not recognize any legal point of entry in the area occupied by Türkiye, and entry through any airport or port in the occupied area was therefore illegal. The ports of Famagusta, Kyrenia and Karavostasi which had been in operation before the invasion of 1974, had been declared closed to all vessels by decree of the Council of Ministers, as the safety of navigation could not be ensured in areas in which the Government did not exercise effective control. Ercan airport had been built illegally and was not recognized by any country except Türkiye. It operated without the required permission of the Government of Cyprus, which, as the only internationally recognized Government on the island and a member of the International Civil Aviation Organization, had exclusive authority under the Convention on International Civil Aviation to determine the country's runways and airports. The issue of entry points was one that was determined and decided upon by the leaders of the two communities in the framework of the reunification talks.

70. Talks on the resolution of the Cyprus issue were ongoing. The Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General on Cyprus continued to engage with all parties to chart the way forward. The Government had reiterated its commitment to achieving a settlement on the basis of a bizonal, bicomunal federation with political equality, as prescribed in relevant Security Council resolutions, as the only viable solution. A solution on that basis was important for all Cypriots and all parties involved in the Cyprus problem. The Government hoped that future meetings would bring clarity on steps towards a viable political process with the prospect of an agreed solution in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Any settlement must safeguard the rights of all Cypriots without discrimination, while ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and redress for past and ongoing human rights violations.

71. Thirteen bicommunal technical committees had begun work in 2008 following the 8 July 2006 agreement between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders to deal with issues that affected people's day-to-day lives. Recent initiatives included "Connecting Generations across the Island through Technology", an event organized by the technical committees on humanitarian affairs and youth, and the issuance of a joint video message on the occasion of International Women's Day. The political party dialogue organized by the Embassy of Slovakia since 1989, the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process under the auspices of the Embassy of Sweden and the Cyprus Women Bicommunal Coalition, founded with the support of the Embassy of Ireland, were also important. Regrettably, the technical committees' work had been impeded in some cases. For example, the Turkish Cypriot side had refused to implement projects that promoted peace and reconciliation through education and had suspended their participation in the award-winning "Imagine" project, implemented by the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research with support from the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus and Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus.

72. **A representative of Cyprus** said that whether fines for acts of racism against footballers were enough of a deterrent was a matter of personal opinion. However, the matter would be referred to the Office of the Law Commissioner, who could conduct research and recommend that the fines be increased if necessary.

73. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the laws regulating Cypriot nationality were implemented without discrimination. Persons of Cypriot origin acquired nationality automatically at birth or, in the case of persons not born in Cyprus or who had left Cyprus before 16 August 1960, through an application for registration. Nationality could also be acquired by naturalization, on the basis of criteria including the applicant's number of years of residence, good character and intention to continue to reside in Cyprus. Legislation did not discriminate on the basis of nationality, gender or place of residence of the parents. The only restriction that applied related to the illegal entry or stay of the foreign parent. In such cases, the Council of Ministers was required to take a decision on the basis of specific criteria, which had been rationalized and clarified in February 2024.

74. **A representative of Cyprus** said that some of the measures introduced at the Agios Antonios primary school were specially targeted at the pupils enrolled there; others were generally aimed at all pupils in vulnerable situations or in need of support. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth focused on ensuring equal opportunities for both genders at all levels of education and to that end had formed an interdepartmental committee that oversaw and coordinated all actions taken in relation to gender equality. Every three years, the committee prepared a gender equality action plan. The plan for the period 2023–2026 contained objectives, actions and commitments to foster a gender equality culture in sustainable ways and at multiple levels.

75. Schools taught an evidence-based history curriculum that used diverse and reliable sources and included voices and experiences that historically had been underrepresented. The curriculum promoted critical thinking, encouraged pupils to engage with the past through multiple viewpoints and supported the development of tolerance, dialogue and democratic citizenship. Particular attention was paid to decolonization, including the critical examination of inherited narratives and the ways in which colonial legacies shaped social attitudes.

76. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the first national action plan of Cyprus for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security had been translated into English and Turkish and had been published on the website of the Commissioner for Gender Equality. The State offered free Turkish language courses to Greek Cypriots and free Greek language courses to Turkish Cypriots.

77. **A representative of Cyprus** said that the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2024–2026 sought to break stereotypes, eliminate prejudice and achieve equal participation. It included actions for different groups of women, including women with a migrant background. In addition, the national action plan for the prevention and combating of

violence against women 2023–2028 contained targeted actions for the protection and support of migrant women, refugee women and women seeking international protection. During the country's presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Government had actively participated in negotiations for the adoption of a new directive on victims' rights, with the aim of improving existing legislation and practical support measures for the protection of victims of all crimes.

78. **Mr. Guissé**, observing that migrants could find themselves in an irregular situation for reasons other than using an illegal point of entry, such as the expiry of a visa or residence permit, said that he would be interested to know whether the Government planned to adopt a regularization policy setting out practical arrangements whereby migrants could regularize their situation.

79. **A representative of Cyprus** said that, in matters of migration status, the Government always acted in line with its international and European obligations. The delegation would provide the Committee with written information on the regularization policy.

80. **A representative of Cyprus** said that during the period under review, there had been significant positive developments that demonstrated the attachment of Cyprus to the letter and the spirit of the Convention. Many anti-discrimination laws had been enacted, policies adopted and national action plans initiated as part of the ongoing process of promoting human rights and combating racism and all forms of discrimination. The Government reaffirmed its strong political will and steadfast commitment to effectively implement the Convention. It would continue to strive to promote equality and tolerance, to combat discrimination in all its forms and to foster an inclusive society based on respect for human dignity and the rule of law.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.