



Economic and Social Council

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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Cyprus*

1. The Committee considered the seventh periodic report of Cyprus¹ at its 43rd and 44th meetings,² held on 17 and 18 September 2024, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 59th meeting, held on 27 September 2024.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission by the State party of its seventh periodic report and the supplementary information provided in the replies to the list of issues.³ The Committee expresses appreciation for the constructive dialogue that it held with the State party's delegation.

3. The Committee recognizes that the State party does not exercise control over the entirety of its territory, which poses severe challenges for the State party in fully implementing its obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. However, the Committee reminds the State party that the Covenant is applicable throughout its territory and that it should take all possible measures to implement the Covenant in all parts of its territory.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the following legislative and institutional measures:

(a) The adoption in 2021 of the first National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, and the establishment in 2019 of the Human Rights Unit at the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, which is mandated to monitor the human rights situation in the State party and the implementation of the State party's international obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights guaranteed under the Covenant;

(b) The adoption of the Law on the Protection of Persons who Report Breaches of Union and National Law of 2022.

* Adopted by the Committee at its seventy-sixth session (9–27 September 2024).

¹ E/C.12/CYP/7.

² See E/C.12/2024/SR.43 and E/C.12/2024/SR.44.

³ E/C.12/CYP/RQ/7.



C. Principal subjects of concern and recommendations

Domestic application of the Covenant

5. The Committee is concerned about the infrequent application of the Covenant by the domestic judicial system and the generally low level of awareness of the Covenant in the wider justice system.

6. **The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen awareness of the Covenant among lawyers, prosecutors and judges to help to ensure that its provisions are, where possible, invoked before and applied by the national courts. In this regard, the Committee recalls its general comment No. 9 (1998) on the domestic application of the Covenant.**

Civil society organizations

7. The Committee is concerned about reports that the State party has instrumentalized the legal and regulatory framework governing the activities of civil society organizations, including through the 2020 amendment to the law on associations, which allows the Ministry of Interior to rapidly deregister civil society organizations deemed to be inactive or non-compliant with the law. Reported examples of instrumentalization include undue restrictions on the right to freedom of association and on the funding and operations of civil society organizations, including organizations working on the economic, social and cultural rights of migrants and refugees.

8. **The Committee recommends that the State party consider reviewing the 2020 amendment to the law on associations with a view to removing unduly restrictive requirements regarding the operations of civil society organizations, including those working on the economic, social and cultural rights of migrants and refugees.**

Business and economic, social and cultural rights

9. The Committee is concerned about the absence of a national action plan for business and human rights. The Committee is also concerned about reports that the State party's enforcement of its legislative and regulatory framework regarding money-laundering and tax evasion is insufficient, including in respect of companies in the financial sector and companies that are legally domiciled in the State party without a physical presence in its territory, leading to a negative impact on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights both within and beyond the State party.

10. **The Committee recommends that the State party develop a national action plan for business and human rights. The Committee also recommends that the State party take all measures necessary to ensure the enforcement of national, regional and international legal obligations to prevent, investigate and prosecute all cases of money-laundering and tax evasion by companies legally domiciled in the State party, including companies in the financial sector. In this regard, the Committee recalls its general comment No. 24 (2017) on State obligations under the Covenant in the context of business activities.**

Climate change

11. Noting the information provided by the State party regarding the Rural Development Programme, which promotes the intensified implementation of forestry measures, the Committee is concerned that the contribution of the Rural Development Programme to the country's overall emissions/absorption balance cannot be estimated.

12. **The Committee recommends that the State party task relevant line ministries, relevant research institutions and/or universities with calculating the net emissions/absorption balance of forestry measures under the Rural Development Programme.**

13. The Committee is concerned that current emission-reducing policies may not be sufficient for the State party to fulfil its obligations under the Paris Agreement (art. 2 (1)).

14. **The Committee recommends that the State party take measures to achieve its nationally determined contribution under the Paris Agreement, including by increasing taxation on emissions, and increase its efforts to replace fossil fuels in its energy mix. In this regard, the Committee recalls its statement on climate change and the Covenant.⁴**

Maximum available resources

15. The Committee is concerned about the State party's limited capacity to effectively collect taxes and combat tax evasion, which weakens its ability to mobilize the resources necessary to implement the rights enshrined in the Covenant. The Committee is also concerned about the State party's excessive reliance on fluctuating revenues from tourism, making its economy vulnerable to external uncertainties (art. 2 (1)).

16. **The Committee recommends that the State party redouble its efforts to improve its ability to collect taxes and to combat tax evasion and reduce its dependence on fluctuating levels of tourism.**

Corruption

17. While noting the information provided by the delegation regarding the Establishment and Operation of the Independent Authority against Corruption Law of 2022, the Committee is concerned about reports that the State party has granted early release and pardons to individuals convicted on corruption charges. The Committee is also concerned about reports of insufficient coordination among the various anti-corruption bodies and insufficient concrete measures to ensure that officials investigating and/or prosecuting corruption cases are not subject to conflicts of interest, including through "revolving door" employment practices by companies (art. 2 (1)).

18. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Promptly, independently and impartially investigate and prosecute all cases of corruption, in particular high-level corruption, including corruption in the Government, and, if a person is convicted, apply penalties commensurate with the seriousness of the offence;**

(b) **Ensure the independence, effective coordination, transparency and accountability of all anti-corruption bodies, including the Independent Authority against Corruption and the anti-corruption task force;**

(c) **Review its legislation, policies, guidelines and actual practices to eliminate the risk of corruption through "revolving door" hiring practices.**

Austerity measures

19. While noting the relatively high economic growth in the State party in recent years, the Committee is concerned about the residual adverse impact of previous austerity measures on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights (arts. 2 (1), 6, 9, 11 and 12).

20. **The Committee recommends that the State party assess the impact on the rights guaranteed under the Covenant when making future budgetary adjustments and take all measures necessary to reduce any negative impact on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, including as a result of previous austerity measures. In this regard, the Committee recalls its statement on public debt, austerity measures and the Covenant.⁵**

Non-discrimination

21. The Committee is concerned about the absence of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation providing full and effective protection against all forms of discrimination prohibited under the Covenant. The Committee is also concerned about reports of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and that draft legislation aimed

⁴ E/C.12/2018/1.

⁵ E/C.12/2016/1.

at recognizing gender reassignment and allowing adoption by same-sex couples has not been passed (art. 2 (2)).

22. The Committee recommends that the State party enact comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that provides for full and effective protection against discrimination in all spheres and contains a comprehensive list of prohibited grounds of discrimination, including explicit references to sexual orientation and gender identity. The Committee also recommends that the State party expedite the adoption of the pending bill on recognizing gender reassignment and the pending bill on allowing adoption by same-sex couples.

23. The Committee is concerned about reports that Turkish Cypriots continue to be discriminated against, including reports that they face restrictions on their access to bank accounts. The Committee is also concerned about reports that the socioeconomic gap between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots continues to widen, to the disadvantage of Turkish Cypriots. The Committee is further concerned about the risk of statelessness for children born in Cyprus to migrant or refugee parents (art. 2 (2)).

24. The Committee recalls its general comment No. 20 (2009) on non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights and recommends that the State party:

(a) **Conduct a thorough review of the state of implementation of reforms and existing legislation aimed at eliminating discriminatory practices and promoting inclusivity, including access to bank accounts and property;**

(b) **Streamline the citizenship application process for Turkish Cypriot children born of mixed marriages and residing in the northern part of Cyprus to prevent unnecessary delays or rejections and implement clear guidelines and timelines for processing such applications, ensuring fairness and transparency;**

(c) **Implement targeted policies and initiatives aimed at reducing the socioeconomic gap between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, which could include, for example, investment in education, job training programmes, infrastructure development and the equitable distribution of resources to promote economic empowerment and social inclusion for all;**

(d) **Take all measures necessary to combat statelessness, including by revising relevant national legislation and ratifying the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.**

Equal rights of men and women

25. The Committee is concerned that gender disparities persist, in particular in relation to the gender pay gap. While noting the information provided by the delegation regarding the increase in the number of women members of the Council of Ministers in recent years, the Committee is also concerned that women's overall representation in senior positions in the public and private sectors remains unsatisfactory (arts. 3 and 7).

26. The Committee recalls its general comment No. 16 (2005) on the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights and recommends that the State party:

(a) **Intensify its efforts to close the gender pay gap by, inter alia, addressing gender-based segregation in the labour market, reviewing its social and tax policies and addressing the factors that discourage women from continuing their careers or taking up full-time employment, including by ensuring the equal sharing of unpaid domestic work and childcare between women and men, by increasing the availability of affordable childcare and other care and support services and by increasing incentives for men to take paternity leave;**

(b) **Enhance women's participation in senior positions in the public and private sectors, including by considering the introduction of quotas.**

Right to work

27. The Committee is concerned about the rise in female youth unemployment in recent years and the stark overrepresentation of young people and persons with disabilities among the unemployed (arts. 3 and 6).

28. **The Committee recommends that the State party increase its efforts to address unemployment, for example by implementing targeted public sector employment schemes and by paying particular attention to unemployment among young people, in particular young women, and among persons with disabilities. The Committee also recommends that the State party continue to make the education system more responsive to the needs of the labour market, for example by expanding vocational training.**

Right to just and favourable conditions of work

29. Noting the provisions on the minimum wage, the Committee is concerned about reports of deficiencies in enforcing labour laws and decrees, including inadequate monitoring of the working and living conditions of domestic workers. The Committee is also concerned about reports that many domestic workers endure exploitative conditions, such as excessively long working hours without breaks or days off, confiscation of their passports and mobile phones and instances of physical, verbal or sexual abuse. Furthermore, the fact that domestic workers are not covered by the 2022 Minimum Wage Decree raises additional concerns about the State party's ability to oversee employers' compliance with legal requirements regarding salaries and allowances and its ability to effectively address any violations thereof (art. 7).

30. **The Committee recalls its general comment No. 23 (2016) on the right to just and favourable conditions of work and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Increase the number of labour inspectors and strengthen their capacities, while removing any legal or administrative barriers impeding oversight of domestic workers' working conditions;**

(b) **Ensure the implementation of legal and practical protections against all forms of sexual harassment for domestic workers and provide effective avenues for recourse;**

(c) **Ensure seamless access to existing mechanisms for reporting abuse or exploitation, recognizing the challenges that some domestic workers face in accessing communication channels;**

(d) **Conduct thorough investigations into all allegations of human rights violations against domestic workers;**

(e) **Expand the scope of the 2022 Minimum Wage Decree to include domestic workers;**

(f) **Ratify the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), and the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), of the International Labour Organization.**

Trade union rights

31. The Committee is concerned about reports of the inconsistent enforcement of legislation providing for remedies for anti-union discrimination.

32. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all measures necessary to ensure the enforcement of legislation relating to anti-union discrimination. In this regard, the Committee recalls its joint statement with the Human Rights Committee on freedom of association, including the right to form and join trade unions.⁶**

⁶ E/C.12/66/5-CCPR/C/127/4.

Right to social security

33. Noting the information provided by the State party regarding relevant legislation, the Committee is concerned that the medium- and long-term financial sustainability of the pension system is negatively affected by the lack of sufficient measures to adjust to the relatively rapid ageing of the population, which may negatively affect retirees' continued enjoyment of economic and social rights (art. 9).

34. **The Committee recalls its general comment No. 19 (2007) on the right to social security and recommends that the State party:**

- (a) **Bring the retirement age for government officials into line with the general retirement age;**
- (b) **Consider adjusting the level of mandatory contributions to the General Social Insurance Scheme to ensure that contributions align with expenditures;**
- (c) **Ensure the timely implementation of relevant International Labour Organization recommendations regarding the pension system.**

Protection of the family and children

35. The Committee is concerned about the situation of child migrants and asylum-seekers, in particular that of unaccompanied children, and limitations on the right to family reunification and on obtaining Cypriot citizenship. The Committee is also concerned about the lack of support for parents caring for children with disabilities, leading to institutionalization.

36. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

- (a) **Ensure that all unaccompanied children migrating to the State party are placed in accommodation that provides high-quality care and ensures their access to health, education and leisure time, including by ensuring that the Pournara first reception centre is used only for the purposes of registration of asylum applications and orientation and not as a long-term reception facility;**
- (b) **Introduce additional supported independent living programmes or ensure tailored reintegration plans to assist unaccompanied children with independent living once they reach the age of majority;**
- (c) **Review the right to family reunification for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection; and review the right to family residence permits for the spouses and children of beneficiaries of international protection where the family was formed in Cyprus;**
- (d) **Take all steps necessary to prevent forced returns at the border and avoid family separations;**
- (e) **Take all steps necessary to review the requirements for obtaining Cypriot nationality for children born in Cyprus, with a view to granting nationality to children who would otherwise be stateless, regardless of the status of their parents in relation to nationality, residence, legal status and marital status, paying particular attention to children born to refugee, asylum-seeking, migrant or stateless parents;**
- (f) **Take all measures necessary to ensure that children with disabilities can enjoy their right to grow up in a family environment, including measures to increase the availability of early intervention and socioeconomic support services and access to information about these services.**

37. The Committee is concerned about reports that domestic violence against women and children is underreported, including within communities of foreign nationals and within ethnic minority communities. The Committee is also concerned about the low rates of prosecution and conviction in cases of domestic violence. The Committee is further concerned about reports that the State party is a destination for trafficking in persons, including in unaccompanied children and children of migrant, Roma and asylum-seeking

parents, who are particularly vulnerable to trafficking for sexual or labour exploitation (arts. 3, 7 and 10).

38. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Redouble its efforts to combat gender-based violence and domestic violence, including by ensuring the timely and comprehensive implementation of the National Strategy and National Action Plan (2023–2028) on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women;**

(b) **Increase its efforts to systematically inform women, in particular those from ethnic minority and foreign national communities, about their rights and available avenues for reporting violence and seeking protection, assistance and redress;**

(c) **Enhance training initiatives on women's rights and gender-based violence, including mandatory training programmes, for all relevant stakeholders, in particular national and local authorities, law enforcement personnel, judges and prosecutors;**

(d) **Intensify efforts to ensure the prompt and effective investigation of violence against women, the prosecution of perpetrators, the imposition of appropriate punishments upon conviction and the provision of accessible remedies and protective measures for victims;**

(e) **Enhance the current system for gathering comprehensive and disaggregated data on domestic violence and extend it to include information on complaints, investigations, prosecutions, convictions and sentences related to gender-based violence;**

(f) **Allocate adequate resources to the police anti-trafficking unit to ensure that it can effectively investigate and prosecute cases of trafficking, in particular in women and girls, and, if a person is convicted, apply penalties commensurate with the seriousness of the offence.**

Poverty

39. Noting the decrease in recent years in the percentage of the population living below the national poverty line, the Committee is concerned that the poverty rate remains high, including for women, older persons and single parents (art. 11).

40. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all measures necessary to adequately address the needs of low-income persons and families, including by increasing targeted social transfers to women, older persons and single parents living below the national poverty line. In this regard, the Committee recalls its statement on poverty and the Covenant⁷ and its statement on social protection floors as an essential element of the right to social security and of the Sustainable Development Goals.⁸**

Right to adequate housing

41. The Committee is concerned about reports that Turkish Cypriot property owners face obstacles in accessing their properties and seeking restitution (arts. 2 (2) and 11).

42. **The Committee recommends that the State party remove obstacles that hinder Turkish Cypriot property owners from accessing their properties and seeking rightful restitution.**

43. The Committee is concerned about reports of a deficit of affordable homes and that migrants and refugees face a heightened risk of exploitative practices by landlords and homelessness (arts. 2 (2) and 11).

44. **The Committee recommends that the State party take immediate measures to address the housing situation, including by prioritizing funding for the construction of new and affordable housing units, strengthen oversight and enforcement mechanisms**

⁷ E/C.12/2001/10.

⁸ E/C.12/2015/1.

to prevent exploitation by landlords and reduce the risk of homelessness, including for migrants and refugees. In this regard, the Committee recalls its general comment No. 4 (1991) on the right to adequate housing.

Climate change adaptation

45. Noting the existence of national adaptation plans for climate change, the Committee is concerned that the resources allocated may be insufficient to adequately prevent the negative impacts of climate change on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, in particular regarding water supply and drought preparedness, which may disproportionately affect persons with disabilities, persons affected by poverty, older persons, persons with health issues, peasants, fisherfolk and outdoor and/or agricultural workers (art. 11).

46. The Committee recommends that the State party redouble its efforts to prevent and mitigate the negative effects of climate change, including by ensuring that food and water prices remain affordable for groups and persons in vulnerable situations and that nursing homes and hospitals are adequately equipped to ensure the health of older persons and patients. The Committee also recommends that the State party review relevant labour regulations to prevent outdoor and/or agricultural workers from being exposed to dangerous outdoor temperatures. The Committee further recommends that the State party significantly increase the resources dedicated to building the resilience of its economy, in particular the agriculture, fisheries and tourism sectors, and society to water scarcity and to environmental shocks. This could include, for example, expanding tree-planting programmes, constructing desalination plants and increasing the number and capacity of wastewater treatment plants. In this regard, the Committee recalls its general comment No. 15 (2002) on the right to water.

Right to physical and mental health

47. The Committee is concerned about the sizeable health disparities across income groups, the high level of mortality as a result of tobacco consumption and the rise in recent years in cases of HIV/AIDS. The Committee is also concerned about reports of inadequate access to mental health care, including for refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants. The Committee is further concerned that certain forms of drug use for personal consumption continue to be criminalized (arts. 2 (2) and 12).

48. The Committee recalls its general comment No. 14 (2000) on the right to the highest attainable standard of health and recommends that the State party:

(a) Take all measures necessary to improve its healthcare services and guarantee the enjoyment of the right to good-quality and affordable healthcare to all persons throughout the State party, including persons on low incomes and women pensioners;

(b) Redouble its efforts to reduce tobacco consumption, including by increasing taxes on the sale of tobacco and further restricting its consumption in public places and through awareness-raising campaigns;

(c) Increase access to antiretroviral treatment and improve specialized healthcare facilities and the training of health workers with a view to reducing the prevalence of HIV/AIDS;

(d) Ensure funding to improve mental health care services at both the preventive and the treatment levels, including by providing community-based services and programmes, in particular for refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants;

(e) Ensure a human rights-based approach to addressing drug use and decriminalize drug use for personal consumption.

Right to education

49. The Committee is concerned about reports of the difficulties encountered by persons seeking to obtain recognition of university degrees from other education systems (arts. 2 (2), 13 and 14).

50. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that all systems for the recognition of academic degrees be simplified to allow for the academic and professional development of those affected, ensuring the principles of non-discrimination and academic rigour and maintaining a focus on respect for the right to education.**

51. The Committee is concerned that the academic results of students (as measured, for example, by the State party's ranking according to the Programme for International Student Assessment of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) have been declining in recent years. The Committee is also concerned about the high dropout rate at the primary level of pupils who are not nationals of a State member of the European Union compared with that of pupils born in the State party (arts. 2 (2), 13 and 14).

52. **The Committee recommends that the State party redouble its efforts to provide affordable quality education and review the possible fundamental, structural causes of the declining results, with a view to reversing the trend. The Committee also recommends that the State party effectively implement existing policies and action plans aimed at ensuring inclusive integration for pupils who are not nationals of a State member of the European Union and Roma, refugee and migrant pupils.**

53. The Committee is concerned about reports that children with disabilities are excluded from inclusive education in mainstream schools, which reportedly amounts to de facto segregation (arts. 2 (2), 13 and 14).

54. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that all children with disabilities have access to inclusive education, including by providing pre-service and in-service training to teachers and ensuring reasonable accommodation in terms of infrastructure, teaching support, materials and methods and individualized education plans.⁹**

Cultural rights

55. Noting the State party's good practices with regard to heritage sites, the Committee is concerned about reports of the difficulties that some communities face with regard to access to their religious and/or heritage sites (arts. 2 (2) and 15).

56. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all measures necessary to ensure unhindered access to sites of religious and/or cultural importance and to reinforce the participative, accessible, community and human development- and human rights-focused management of cultural policies. In this regard, the Committee recalls its general comment No. 21 (2009) on the right of everyone to take part in cultural life.**

D. Other recommendations

57. **The Committee encourages the State party to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.**

58. **The Committee recommends that the State party ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.**

59. **The Committee also recommends that the State party take fully into account its obligations under the Covenant and ensure the full enjoyment of the rights enshrined therein in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national level, including in the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, with international assistance and cooperation when needed. Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals would be significantly facilitated by the State party establishing independent mechanisms to monitor progress and treating beneficiaries of public programmes as rights holders who can claim entitlements. Moreover, the**

⁹ See also [CRC/C/CYP/CO/5-6](#), para. 36 (d).

Committee recommends that the State party support the global commitment to the decade of action for sustainable development. Implementing the Goals on the basis of the principles of participation, accountability and non-discrimination would ensure that no one is left behind. In this regard, the Committee draws the State party's attention to its statement on the pledge to leave no one behind.¹⁰

60. The Committee requests that the State party disseminate the present concluding observations widely at all levels of society, including at the national and municipal levels, in particular among public officials and judicial authorities, and that it inform the Committee in its next periodic report about the steps taken to implement them. The Committee emphasizes the crucial role that the parliament plays in implementing the present concluding observations and encourages the State party to ensure its involvement in future reporting and follow-up procedures. The Committee encourages the State party to engage with the Commissioner for Administration and Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman), non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society in the follow-up to the present concluding observations and in the process of consultation at the national level prior to the submission of its next periodic report.

61. In accordance with the procedure on follow-up to concluding observations adopted by the Committee, the State party is requested to provide, within 24 months of the adoption of the present concluding observations (31 October 2026), information on the implementation of the recommendations contained in paragraphs 22 (non-discrimination), 36 (a) (protection of the family and children) and 54 (right to education).

62. The Committee requests the State party to submit its eighth periodic report in accordance with article 16 of the Covenant by 31 October 2029, unless otherwise notified as a result of a change in the review cycle. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/268, the word limit for the report is 21,200 words. In addition, it invites the State party to update its common core document, as necessary, in accordance with the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties.¹¹

¹⁰ E/C.12/2019/1.

¹¹ HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I.