



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**The role of the UN in Combating Antisemitism /17 November 2020**

Cyprus is honored to co-sponsor this important high-level event on mainstreaming the combating of anti-Semitism within the UN system and wishes to extend its genuine gratitude to the World Jewish Congress for its leadership in this regard.

Anti-Semitism continues to be pervasive and to manifest itself in racist attitudes, hate speech, and violence. It is particularly abhorrent because it led to a genocide of horrific barbarity and proportions. The Holocaust is among the darkest pages of history, whose lessons we cannot afford not to learn.

Absolute condemnation of all forms of racism and hate must be the international community's minimum common denominator and starting point. The United Nations, as the premier international organization tasked with promoting and protecting human rights and dignity, must be in the forefront and lead by example in the fight against racism and discrimination. The UN system as a whole has an enormous responsibility and a crucial role to play on this and its potency is far-reaching given its numerous agencies and wide presence on the ground.

At the same time, the UN can only achieve so much in respect of the attitudes of individuals, which is what racism and intolerance ultimately come down to. The leadership shown by the UN Secretary-General should be emulated by leaders around the world, both in terms of public messaging, but also in national governance in general and education policy in particular, with zero tolerance for intolerance.

Contemporary means of spreading racist ideology like wildfire and on a massive scale is giving new dimensions to an already gargantuan challenge, while crises like Covid-19 provide fertile ground for polarization and social alienation, enhancing fear of the "other". The United Nations provides a unique platform to address the largely unregulated virtual world, through global cooperation, in the same way that it has gradually developed and codified rules for individual and state rights and responsibilities in the real world. The full implementation of the UN Strategic and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, launched by the UNSG in June 2019, is a step in the right direction.

Cyprus stands ready to work on a global Plan of Action to eradicate all forms of racism and hate including anti-Semitism to achieve a more results-oriented approach to these resilient phenomena, knowing full well the destabilizing power of such phenomena and the threat they constitute to the democratic values, universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, on which our modern societies are founded.