

Intervention by the president of the Republic of Cyprus to the high-level segment of COP29

Baku, Azerbaijan, 12/11/2024

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset I would like to extend my gratitude to the Government of Azerbaijan for hosting COP29.

Today, the world's attention is focused on our deliberations here in Baku, as the outcomes of this Conference are critical to our shared commitment to securing a sustainable future for our planet.

Ladies and gentlemen, I address you today with feelings of honour but also of great concern.

We stand at a crucial juncture as the impacts of climate change are intensifying with alarming speed. In the Mediterranean region, we are witnessing a rise in extreme weather events: raging wildfires, severe and prolonged droughts, extreme heat, sea level rise and catastrophic, deadly flooding, as we very recently saw happening in Spain.

Speaking also from my own country's experience, these extreme weather events are impacting our ecosystems, our economies including agriculture and tourism, our communities and the quality of life of our people.

They act as a stark warning and also are highlighting the urgent need for decisive, coordinated action.

Excellencies,

We need immediate, targeted responses at both the national and regional levels.

Cyprus has taken proactive steps by implementing a National Adaptation Strategy since 2017. We are currently updating this Strategy to strengthen our capacity to manage complex and interlinked climate risks. Despite our small carbon footprint, Cyprus is committed to contributing to global emissions reduction.

Within the EU framework, we submitted an enhanced Nationally Determined Contribution in 2020, pledging to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels and the EU as a whole remains resolute in its legally binding commitment to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

At regional level, Cyprus recently relaunched the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East Climate Change Initiative aiming to develop synergies to mitigate the impact of climate change with a focus on cross-border projects.

There is also a number of other, very promising regional initiatives that aim to address the effects of climate change in our region. These need to be politically encouraged but also sufficiently funded so they can be implemented.

For example, in light of the increased number of catastrophic wildfires that affect the Eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus and Jordan are working towards the establishment of a Regional Aerial Firefighting Station in Cyprus. There are also regional initiatives for marine protection, for sustainable water management practices in agriculture as well as for enhanced cooperation between Mediterranean states to mitigate the impacts of drought.

Dear friends,

It is crystal clear that government action alone is not enough.

We also need to engage our societies, our citizens, and our businesses in this collective mission and fundamentally rethink the relationship between our economies and nature. For example, green investments, the transformation of the energy and industrial sectors, and the eventual decarbonization across sectors, can be the answer to more competitive and healthier markets.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I already stressed, only by acting collectively, with urgency and ambition, we can avert the most severe consequences of climate change. Our global ambition must substantially increase to align with the Paris Agreement to keep the 1.5 degrees Celsius objective within reach.

With this in mind, we need to successfully conclude COP29, with a determined and forward-looking outcome, crystalizing pathways and opportunities for a climate resilient and sustainable development.

Dear friends,

Before closing, I would like to acknowledge the importance of youth: Young voices have been instrumental in pushing for an ambitious climate agenda.

Let's hear their voices and let's heed their call. If we ignore these voices, our children and grandchildren will inherit a climate and natural dystopia.

Let us resolutely walk together the path to climate neutrality. Only, together, we can build resilient, sustainable, and green societies for the generations that will inherit our planet.

Thank you.