

Speech by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

H.E. Ambassador Mr. Alexandros N. Zenon,

at the closing ceremony of Cyprus' National Program

for the European Year for Development EYD 2015.

House of Representatives, January 20th, 2016.

Following a whole year of organising various events, coordinator of which was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, today we would like to declare the closing of Cyprus' national program for the European Year for Development EYD2015.

As you know, 2015 was proclaimed as the European Year for Development by the Council and the European Parliament. For the first time a European Year was devoted to a foreign policy issue, under the motto "Our world, our dignity, our future".

The ways in which the global, common goal, called sustainable development, is achieved and the necessary tools for its accomplishment are different in every place and for every people. Nevertheless, the essential elements that comprise development are common for everyone. These include education, health, gender equality, empowerment of women, girls and young people, support for entrepreneurship, especially SMEs, environmental protection and human rights, as well as rule of law with institutions capable of fighting corruption and ensuring peace and security.

All the elements that make up the notion of sustainable development, as well as the European Union action to achieve them and the need for every citizen to participate in this global effort, were presented last year through our activities. They were captured by the lens of important Cypriot photographers; filmed by our teenagers; painted by young children; important aspects of theirs were analyzed by high-level speakers at our academic institutions and by young columnists, while a series of remarkable documentaries on development issues was aired in all our cities.

Our main ambition was to create citizens' awareness for global issues with a special emphasis on our youth. For this reason, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in its capacity as National Coordinator of the EYD2015 in Cyprus, requested the assistance and expertise of the Ministry of Education and Culture and of the Cypriot platform of non-governmental development organizations CYINDEP, in cooperation with whom we shaped and implemented our national program. I thank them especially for their decisive contribution and for the time devoted to this activity throughout 2015.

The aforementioned partnership was accompanied by several other stakeholders: the European Commission and the Cabinet of Commissioner Stylianides; local authorities; academic institutions; the Pedagogical Institute; the Press and Information Office; photographers' associations; Friends of Cinema associations in several cities; groups of students and their professors; the Embassies of Romania and Italy, as well as experts from the private sector, to name a few and thank them warmly.

I wish also to express my satisfaction and thank the Chairman and members of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign and European Affairs for hosting the closing ceremony of our national program for the European Year for Development 2015.

I consider the participation of the House of Representatives in EYD2015 very important, not only because it completes, institutionally and practically the circle of representation of the Cypriot society and leadership in the organised events, but also for symbolic reasons.

As members of this Committee are well aware, 2015 was a landmark year for sustainable development. Humanity has decided to set targets for eradicating poverty, promoting sustainable development and tackling climate change. Last September, in New York, UN member states expressed their commitment to act in this direction, in the form of a document entitled "*Transforming our world: Agenda 2030 for sustainable development*". Representatives of the legislative power from all countries were involved in this process.

Considering the events that our region has been experiencing in recent years, culminating in the current unprecedented refugee and humanitarian crisis, as well as the successive terrorist attacks in Europe and elsewhere, we see that the issue we are dealing with is entirely relevant.

The ambitious vision of sustainability leaders of our planet adopted on 25-26 September records the elements that would prevent such tragic events, the ingredients that will return hope to young people for their future, so that they do not get carried away by fanatics.

Through cooperation and solidarity, we must manage to end poverty, hunger and inequalities; to protect our planet from destruction caused by human greed; to ensure progress and prosperity for all, promoting societies without violence, fear and discrimination. Only then will we have peace, security and stability.

The Agenda 2030, as is its short name, is universal, since it concerns and should be applied by all countries, both rich and poor, under the principle that no-one should be left behind. Through its 17 agreed targets and 169 sub-targets, it should be incorporated into government programs of all countries of the world, including Cyprus, over the next 15 years.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through a decision of the Council of Ministers, has initiated the process of evaluation of Agenda 2030, in order to identify points where we need to focus as well in the short, medium and long-term planning of its application in Cyprus. In this process, we look forward to the support of all the principal actors of the Cypriot society.

The partnership of Government and civil society and the involvement of academic institutions, local authorities and, currently, the House of Representatives in the organization of the EYD2015 activities, reflect the active participation of all in the effort to promote sustainable development.

The wish of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is that the present closing ceremony marks the beginning of a consultation and cooperation that will result, in the end, to the desired and timely fulfillment by Cyprus of the international vision for sustainable development and to our country's contribution to the improvement and prosperity of an interdependent world.