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**The Human Rights Dimension: Addressing the Rise of Global Genocidal Anti-Semitism and Vatican II’s Nostra Aetate**

August 11, 2015

Conference at the United Nations

MONICA PACHOUMI, Third Committee Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs on behalf of the Permanent Mission of Cyprus to the United Nations: Dear organizers, on behalf of the Mission of Cyprus to the United Nations I would like to congratulate you on today's event. We express our concern about the disturbing rise of anti-Semitic hatred and violence internationally. The world has suffered too much from war and genocide and we, in Cyprus, know too well the consequences of war. Cyprus has historic relations with Israel and its people dating back to the Hellenistic period.

Cypriots have also witnessed the difficulties faced by the survivors of the Holocaust when, following the end of the Second World War, stayed for around nine months in Cyprus, which was then a British Colony. During that period, Cyprus offered the Jewish refugees their assistance while friendly relations developed.

Today Cyprus is committed to fighting anti-Semitism at the international and national levels through its policies, positions and legislation on combatting racism and xenophobia and religious intolerance and our position is guided by the European Union's positions on the issue. We are also resolved to never again let atrocities such as the Holocaust happen and we observe International Day of the Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust.

The rise of anti-Semitism and a lot of forms of racism and xenophobia can also be combatted through dialogue, education and awareness-raising. In this framework we welcome the UN General Assembly debate to address the concerns that arise in anti-Semitic violence worldwide in January and the Berlin Conference to Commemorate the Tenth Anniversary of the OSCE's Declaration on Anti-Semitism and the Declaration adopted on that occasion.

The contribution of religious leaders is also of significant importance. Nostra Aetate, the historic texts of the Catholic Church adopted in 1965 is one such testimony to how religion can play an important role in religious tolerance and respect. The role of religious leaders was also highlighted during the General Assembly High-Level Thematic Debate on Promoting Tolerance and Reconciliation in April. We welcome and support the call of the UN Secretary-General for the engagement of faith leaders encountering violent extremism and the support expressed by religious leaders during the Thematic Debate on the importance of interfaith dialogue.

The role of religious leaders is recognized in the European Union Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for the period 2015 to 2019, which contains among its actions the promotion of intercultural and interreligious dialogue and the role of religious and other leaders in ensuring freedom of religion or belief.

Ladies and gentlemen, in the effort to combat anti-Semitism and any other form of racism, xenophobia or related intolerance, no effort can be spared. Governments, the international community and religious leaders, we all must stand united. Thank you.