

Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I extend a warm welcome to you all to the opening of the photographic exhibition “Archaeological treasures of the Cyprus Museum” and I thank you heartily for finding the time on the first day of the Council session to be here with us on this special occasion.

I wish to express my appreciation straight away to Director General Møller and his staff for agreeing to host the exhibition in the Palais, in this beautiful, bright setting.

The exhibition is the result of a collaboration between the Press and Information Office and the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus, and I am pleased to be able to say that we are presenting it for the first time outside Cyprus, here, in the UN Office at Geneva.

As you will have a chance to see shortly, it comprises of photographs of the most important archaeological artefacts housed in the Archaeological Museum in Nicosia, with brief descriptions. The exhibition covers seven distinct chronological periods, spanning a total of 10.000 years.

Just like all peoples on earth, we, Cypriots, are naturally very proud of our long history, which defines inevitably who we are. The geographic position of the island, on the crossroads between three continents and in the epicenter of numerous great civilizations, has meant that our ancestors were faced with tough challenges at times, changing multiple conquerors throughout history. But this has also been a blessing, turning Cyprus into a melting pot for different civilizations, cultures, languages and

traditions. You will, therefore, be able to recognise influences from east and west, north and south, in the artefacts that are presented in the exhibition.

Most importantly however, and this is also why we have chosen to present this exhibition on the side of this particular Human Rights Council session, our history is an integral part of our cultural heritage. And as such, it constitutes a small but equally important piece of the big puzzle which is the collective cultural heritage of humanity. This priceless heritage has been under attack in recent times, in different corners of the globe and it is the duty of the international community to step in and take measures to restore and protect it.

Cyprus, as part of a cross-regional core group, is presenting during the current session of the Council a resolution on cultural rights and the protection of cultural heritage and we hope that the Council will support our initiative.

I thank you once again for joining us and I hope that you will enjoy the exhibition and the small cocktail which follows.