

**The President of the Republic addresses the Cyprus people on the issue of
Coronavirus – 13/3/20**

My fellow citizens,

I am aware of the strong feelings of concern and insecurity that each and every one of you is experiencing as a result of the rapid spread of the new epidemic that is affecting all of humanity indiscriminately.

For this reason, I am addressing all of you this evening, every Cypriot citizen and every legal resident of the Republic of Cyprus, in order to convey to you the government's determination to continue taking any measures necessary in order to effectively minimize the consequences of the current crisis.

Our top priority is the protection of the public health of our fellow citizens, while ensuring the economic survival of the working people, small and medium-sized businesses and the vulnerable groups of the population.

To this end, the Ministry of Health took the first set of measures on 23 January 2020, with strict controls on those arriving from China.

On 28 February 2020, the Council of Ministers decided to activate the Cyprus Crisis Management Centre, to suspend the operation of 4 crossing points for more effective control of those passing through and to identify government accommodation facilities or camp sites for the isolation of suspected cases in the event of a pandemic.

Subsequently and as a result of the deterioration of the situation, the Ministry of Health issued updated guidelines on 6, 9, 10, and 12 March with a classification of country risk as well as measures related to travellers' obligations.

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation classified the coronavirus as a pandemic, indicating the uncontrolled spread of the virus and the need for stricter measures.

Dear friends,

Before listing the new set of decisions, I would like to emphasise that no measure, however strict, is sufficient to protect the whole population, unless individual and collective responsibility, discipline in measures and mutual respect are demonstrated.

I want to be perfectly clear. The measures we are taking are the result of recommendations and consultations with the World Health Organisation and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. We are not just urged but are instructed to implement them.

That is why I stand firm when I address all citizens who have the duty to implement the measures.

I appeal to all parents and call upon them to realise that this is not the time to be lenient or to satisfy any wishes their children may reasonably have; it is time for strictness.

I call on young people to understand that not abiding by the measures, because “the virus does not concern me”, is a very dangerous illusion.

The risks do concern you, as well as your loved ones, siblings, parents, grandparents.

I appeal to all of our compatriots living either abroad or in Cyprus, to avoid unnecessary travel.

At the same time, with full respect for everyone’s need to turn to religion for vigor and strength, especially in these difficult times, I would like to point out that one of the fundamental virtues of religion is love for the neighbour, brotherhood and respect for the whole society.

That is why I want to be clear: No one is above or may be exempted from applying all measures that have been decided.

My fellow citizens,

Today at 6 p.m., the World Health Organization announced that Europe is the center of the pandemic.

In the free and occupied areas of Cyprus, a total of 19 cases have been recorded in the last four days.

I know that the measures already taken or additional measures we may be forced to take, affect and disrupt the daily life of us all.

However, we have no other choice.

For this reason, the Government has decided the following additional measures:

A. From 1 a.m. of 15 March and for a period of 15 days in the first phase, the prohibition of entry to any citizen - regardless of nationality - who does not fall into the following categories:

- Cypriot citizens.
- Legal residents in the Republic of Cyprus.
- European nationals or third-country nationals working in the Republic.
- Nationals of countries who are in a designated diplomatic service or mission under bilateral or international conventions.
- Individual cases of European nationals or third-country nationals for unavoidable professional obligations, provided that the relevant authorization has been obtained from the competent Ministry.
 - European or third country citizens attending educational institutions in the Republic of Cyprus.

B. As regards the crossing points between the free and the occupied areas, entry will be permitted only to persons falling into the following categories:

- Cypriot citizens, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots.
- Legal residents in the free areas.
- Nationals of countries who are in a designated diplomatic service or mission under bilateral or international conventions.

I appeal to all Cypriots to use the crossing points when absolutely necessary.

C. The suspension of classes in public and private educational institutions of the country is extended until 10 April.

I would like to stress that during the suspension of operation of public educational institutions, the competent Ministry of Education will take measures to ensure that the curriculum is covered.

My fellow citizens,

The measures that I have mentioned do not affect our country's commercial activities – and I wish to stress this - since no limitations are applied on imports and exports, including basic necessities. Therefore, there is no reason for undue panic.

My fellow citizens,

As I have pointed out, in addition to the protection of public health, equally important is the safeguarding of income and of employment through the support of the working people and of businesses as well as of the economically vulnerable groups.

The financial performance observed in the preceding years, allows us to decisively take measures to support both the employees and the employers and all those who will be affected by this crisis that humanity is facing today.

In this context and over the next few days, the Government will present a comprehensive programme to support the economy, on the basis of a dialogue already held with the parliamentary parties and our social partners.

I want to take this opportunity to express my satisfaction and extend my sincere gratitude to all political parties and to our social partners, who, in a spirit of solidarity and collegiality, have contributed to the formation of the set of measures to be announced.

Dear friends,

In conclusion, it would be an inexcusable omission not to express my own as well as the government's warmest thanks and deep gratitude to all health professionals and to all those who exert themselves in an effort to respond effectively to an epidemic affecting all people indiscriminately.

At the same time, I would like to express my sympathy and support to those who have fallen ill and to their families and to wish them a speedy recovery.

My dear compatriots,

I have no doubt that with the determination of the government, the collective responsibility and social sensitivity that our people have repeatedly exhibited in times of crises, we will succeed in overcoming this ordeal.

I wish you well and be strong.