

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Australian High Commission**  
**Cyprus**

**Visit of Australian MP Maria Vamvakinou to Cyprus Opens Discourse on  
Human Rights, Migration and Peace**

**Nicosia, Cyprus, July 14, 2023** — The Australian High Commission in Cyprus is pleased to announce the successful visit of Australian MP and Chair of the Australia/Cyprus Parliamentary Friendship Group, Ms. Maria Vamvakinou to Cyprus last week.

Ms Vamvakinou is serving as Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Migration, Chair of the Human Rights Subcommittee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, and Member of the House Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Resources in the Parliament of Australia.

In her time in Cyprus, Ms. Vamvakinou, engaged in a series of meetings and discussions centred around her key areas of interest – human rights in relation to migration and the ongoing Cyprus Problem.

Ms. Vamvakinou was updated about the latest happenings on the Cyprus Problem, human trafficking, and the challenges Europe and its front-line states such as Cyprus are facing in dealing with the refugee-asylum seeker situation.

In a meeting with the Cyprus Ministry of Foreign Affairs, she expressed her support towards the ongoing peace talks initiative by the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. Nikos Christodoulides, and expressed her concerns on the solution of the Cyprus problem.

Moreover, Ms. Vamvakinou attended a meeting with members of the Australian-supported bi-communal initiative, Cyprus Academic Dialogue (CAD). During this meeting, various critical aspects were discussed, including the importance of education in promoting human rights, peace-building strategies, and the role of academia in the broader discussion surrounding migration issues. Ms. Vamvakinou applauded the CAD's progressive role in fostering intellectual exchange and research towards resolving the Cyprus Problem.

She also met with government and non-government organisations and agencies that are combating human trafficking, particularly the trafficking of women and girls in Cyprus, including Ms. Josie Christodoulou, the Commissioner for Gender Equality.

Following her visit, Ms. Vamvakinou acknowledged the importance of the inquiry into the violence against women and girls currently held in the Parliament of Australia and affirmed her belief that Australia can play a constructive role in this global issue.

Additionally, Ms. Vamvakinou, accompanied by Australian parliamentarian Kat Theophanous MP, attended an exclusive Women In Leadership viewing of the Indigenous Art exhibition “Jarracharra: Dry Season’s Wind” featuring textiles from the Bábbarra Women’s Centre in the Maningrida Region of Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory of Australia, that is now concluding its tour in Nicosia. The event was attended by the Minister of Justice and Public Order, Ms Anna Koukkides-Procopiou, female Cypriot MPs, and key female CSO members working in the areas of trafficking, women and children’s issues, diversity and inclusion, and media.

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The Australian High Commissioner, Ms. Fiona McKergow, hosted a formal lunch in honour of Ms. Vamvakinou, attended by members of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, Ms Alexandra Attalides, Mr. Aristos Damianou and Mr. Marios Mavrides.

The Australian High Commission to Cyprus is grateful to all those who were part of this pivotal visit, including UNHCR representative Olga Komiti, Caritas Cyprus Managing Director, Elizabeth Kassinis, the Project Coordinator and Senior Legal Advisor of the Cyprus Refugee Council, Corina Drousiotou, the National Expert of the European Network of Legal Experts in Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination, Corina Demetriou, and Katerina Stephanou, Founder & CEO of NGO Step Up Stop Slavery.

We extend our appreciation to the members of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, the Cyprus Academic Dialogue, and all attendees of the Indigenous Art exhibition viewing.

Lastly, we extend our gratitude to the Australian MP Maria Vamvakinou for her significant contribution to promoting bilateral relations between Australia and Cyprus.

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