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**Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus  
Geneva**

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The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus to the Office of the United Nations at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and with reference to the latter's Note Verbale dated 10 March 2014, concerning the questionnaire of the Secretariat of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee on "local government and human rights", has the honour to enclose herewith the relevant information as received from the competent Authorities of the Republic of Cyprus.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus to the Office of the United Nations at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.



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## Answers to the Questionnaire regarding Local Government and Human Rights

1. The Municipalities Law provides for the establishment and function of the municipalities. According to this Law, any community may become a municipality by local referendum, subject to the approval of the Council of Ministers, provided it has either a population of more than 5.000, or has the economic resources to function as a municipality.

Since the Turkish invasion of 1974 and the subsequent occupation of the northern part of Cyprus by Turkey, nine municipalities, although still maintaining their legal status, have been temporarily relocated to the free areas.

Mayors are elected directly by the citizens on a separate ballot, for a term of five years and are the executive authority of the municipalities. The Mayor represents the municipality in a court of Law and before any state authority, and presides over all Council meetings, Administrative Committee meetings and any other municipal committee. He executes the Council's decision and heads all municipal services which he directs and supervises.

Municipal councils, which are the policy-making bodies of the municipalities, are elected directly by the citizens for a term of five years, but separately from the Mayor. The Council appoints the members of the Administrative Committee. The latter's duties include the preparation of the municipality's budgets and annual financial statements, the provision of assistance and advice to the Mayor in the execution of his duties, coordination of the work of other committees appointed by the Council and the carrying out of any other duties entrusted to it by the council or the Mayor. The Council may also set up ad-hoc or standing committees which have an advisory role.

According to the Law, the main responsibilities of municipalities are the construction, maintenance and lighting of streets, the collection, disposal and treatment of waste, the protection and improvement of the environment and the good appearance of the municipal areas, the construction, development and maintenance of municipal gardens and parks, and the protection of public health. The Municipal Council has the authority to promote, depending on its finances, a vast range of activities and events including the arts, education, sport and social services. In addition to the Municipalities Law, there are several laws giving municipalities important powers other than those already mentioned. Such laws are the Streets and Buildings Regulation Law, the Town Planning Law, the Civil Marriages Law and the Sewerage System Law.

The main sources of revenue of municipalities are municipal taxes, fees and duties (professional tax from companies, immovable property tax, hotel accommodation tax, fees for issuing permits and licences, fees for refuse collection, fines etc.), as well as state subsidies. Taxes, duties and fees represent a major source of revenue, while state grants and subsidies also amount to only a substantial percentage of the income. The central government, however, usually finances major infrastructure projects undertaken by the municipalities, but this is dependent very much on each individual project. The yearly budgets of the municipalities are submitted to the Council of Ministers for

approval and their accounts are audited annually by the Auditor General of the Republic. Municipal loans also need to be approved by the Council of Ministers.

2. No, local government in Cyprus is not required by legislation to promote and protect human rights, which is the responsibility of the Central Government.

3. In Cyprus, there is an Ombudsman who is also appointed by the President of Cyprus as the Commissioner for the protection of Human Rights and the local government falls within his/her sphere of competence. When an issue examined involves local authorities, they are obliged to cooperate with the Commissioner and to provide the necessary information so that the case can be investigated.

4. See Ans.3 above

Questions 5 – 9 are not applicable in the case of Local Government in Cyprus. Things may change within the framework of the upcoming Local Government Reform.