



**“A Rare Exhibit”**  
**Opening of the Exhibition of the Minister of Foreign Affairs**  
**H.E. Mr. Nikos Christodoulides**  
**Tuesday, 25 February 2020, 12.30pm**

Your Excellency, Madame Minister Alves,  
Distinguished colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear friends,

It is a great honor to welcome you all to the opening of this photo exhibition, entitled “A Rare Exhibit,” on the occasion of Rare Disease Day. It is a tribute to the people with rare diseases and their families. Allow me to express my gratitude to the Minister of Women, Family and Human Rights of Brazil, Madame Damares Alves, and the Permanent Mission of Brazil for co-sponsoring and supporting this event, showcasing that rare diseases are rare, but rare disease patients are many and can be found across the world.

Two renowned photographers, Mr. Petros Petrides and Mr. Aldo Soligno (who is here with us today) created this photographic testament, with the central message of hope, aiming to portray the resilience of people living with a rare disease and their potential to fulfil their dreams and aspirations, despite the challenges they face.

By bringing this exhibition to the United Nations in Geneva, we are striving to raise much-needed awareness: there are over 7,000 identified rare diseases, affecting over 300 million globally, and we have an obligation to pay more attention. After all, the core principle

of the Sustainable Development Goals is to “leave no one behind”.



**Cyprus** was one of the first countries to fully implement the EU Directive in the field of rare diseases. It developed a National Action Plan that has included the official recognition, establishment of a registry, early diagnosis and intervention programmes, as well as incentivising further research. Awareness-raising is also a very crucial aspect. Just last week, Cyprus' Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised a team together with Ambassadors and diplomats accredited to Cyprus who all ran in support of "Unique Smiles" the Cypriot NGO, one of the organisers of today's event.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Living with a rare disease requires incredible inner strength and, on this occasion, we pay tribute to all the individuals, their families and caretakers for their tireless efforts.

Cyprus, together with the Pancyprian Association of Rare Genetic Diseases, Unique Smiles and Rare Diseases International, remains committed to promoting the rights of patients with rare diseases to allow them to live with dignity.

Thank you.