

**Televised address by the President of the Republic, Mr Nicos Anastasiades, on the issue of the COVID-19 pandemic**

In recent weeks the countries of Europe as well as other continents are on the receiving end of an even more debilitating attack from the so-called invisible enemy.

In spite of its successful handling of the first wave, Cyprus could not be the exception in this new outbreak of the pandemic.

The lifting of most of the restrictive measures has unfortunately led to complacency and the illusion that we have permanently overcome the risks.

The warnings of the World Health Organisation, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control as well as our own scientists, that the virus is still among us, were perceived as an arrogant advice or by some people, even as an intention to deprive citizens of their fundamental freedoms.

Friends,

I fully comprehend the psychological and physical fatigue caused by the sudden life style change, I realise how difficult it is to go against the laws of nature when asking the citizens, and even more so the youth, to be deprived of the things they are entitled to rejoice in and enjoy.

That is why my intervention today is not aimed at incriminating anyone, but it is the outcome of my concern for the protection of everyone's right to life.

Today, I speak not only as President, but more so as a father, as a grandfather, as a parent who worries about the fate of his loved ones but also about for the fate of his fellow citizens.

The daily increase in cases tends to take on uncontrollable proportions, which in addition to life, pose a threat to the health system, to jobs and the well being of everyone and of the country at large.

The scientific advisors of the Government are sounding the alarm that if the existing measures are not fully respected and if we do not react immediately with further restrictive measures, then the consequences for the whole population would be asymmetric

In line with the above, the Government, assuming its responsibilities, is obliged to take additional measures in the hope that citizens will respond, in order to avoid stricter restrictions which, other european countries, one after another, are imposing.

During today's meeting of the Council of Ministers, a series of measures has been decided, which will be announced by the Minister of Health, immediately following my speech.

Nevertheless, I wish to repeat what I had mentioned in my speech on April 29th: «No government planning, no comprehensive plan to tackle either the pandemic or the financial consequences can have the desired results, unless we all realise that we

have to abide strictly by the personal hygiene protocols and the conditions for health safety at the workplaces”.

Dear friends,

I specifically appeal to our young people and ask them to consider how much pain they will suffer in case their father, mother, a sibling or a beloved grandfather or grandmother, passes away due to an imprudent behaviour or negligence on their behalf.

I urge them not to ignore how insecure they will feel, if one of their parents goes into unemployment.

At the same time, I ask parents to realize that if, during this period, they avoid mass social and festive events for their children, it will be a minor sacrifice for the common good.

I will insist that it is time for everyone to undertake individual and social responsibility towards our relatives, friends and fellow citizens.

Dear friends,

I want to assure you that the Government, in addition to restrictive protection measures and the further strengthening of the public health system, has bought a significant number of rapid antigen tests, to enable early diagnosis in public schools, military camps, communities, etc.

At the same time, I want to convey to you the hope of the scientific community that we are close to tackling the pandemic with effective vaccines that are in the final stages of testing.

Cyprus, through the mechanisms of the European Union, has already pre-purchased vaccines that cover the whole population.

Dear friends,

At the same time, as a result of sound financial management, we will address the financial implications and risks that the pandemic has caused and continues to cause to affected businesses and employees.

To this end, the Minister of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance will announce tomorrow a package of measures for the further protection of employees and companies, while the Minister of Finance, within the next few days, will announce plans to cover operating expenses of affected businesses.

I ask for your understanding, therefore I appeal to you for patience in the belief that the ordeal that humanity is facing will soon be overcome.

If we all behave responsibly during these critical hours, if we all show consistency and prudence, I have no doubt that we will succeed again.

Thank you.