

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

20 November 2015



President Anastasiades during the meeting with the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom at the presidential palace. (Photo: PIO Photographic Department)

British Foreign Minister visits Cyprus

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom, Mr Philip Hammond, paid a working visit to Cyprus on **19 November 2015** and was received by President Anastasiades at the Presidential Palace. In statements to the press after the meeting Mr Hammond said that: "it was a great pleasure to meet again with President Anastasiades and have an update from him on the negotiations around the settlement of the long-running division of the island. Obviously, the whole international community ardently desires settlement. We are working in every way we can to support the two communities in trying to find a resolution to this long-running problem. I am optimistic. The President and Mr Akıncı are working well together; both of them are committed to finding solutions, but there are of course big challenges that still need to be addressed and we will give every support we can as they move to find a solution".

In his own remarks about the meeting, Government Spokesman Nikos Christodoulides, pointed out that: "the Cyprus problem was one of the main issues discussed in the meeting of the President of the Republic and the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and more specifically the state of affairs at the talks, but also specific aspects of the Cyprus problem that are being discussed at the negotiating table and, in this context, the role that Turkey is expected to play in the effort that is underway. There was also discussion about the EU-Turkey issues, also in combination with migration and the dialogue that is underway at a European level. Moreover, the British proposals for reforms in the EU as well as a number of bilateral issues were also discussed."

Mr Hammond also met with this counterpart, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Ioannis Kasoulides and during their joint press conference he indicated that this second visit of his to Cyprus in four months "reflects the importance



that we attach to the developments that are going on in seeking a settlement to the Cyprus question”.

Referring to the Cyprus problem, Mr Hammond stated that “the leaders of both communities have created a sense of hope, a sense of momentum, towards a solution to this long-standing problem. It will be hugely to the benefit of all Cypriots, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, to resolve this issue and allow the island to function again as a single entity. We understand that there are still some big challenges to resolve. I know that the leaders are now focusing on these big and difficult issues. We wish them well in doing so, and we will provide every support we can. I know that I can speak not only for the United Kingdom, but also about the European Union and for other friends and partners beyond the European Union, when I say that. The UN-led process has all of our strong support and we will work with it in the upcoming weeks and months”.

On bilateral relations, the British Secretary of State said the two countries share a very strong relationship, that over the last few years is growing even stronger. He also added that “We are finding new ways of collaborating together and we will continue to do so, including the collaboration in countering the poisonous ideology of ISIS. You live much closer than we do to a very dangerous and unstable region. We never forget that you are only 60-70 miles from the coast of Syria, so you have a very big interest in ensuring that we collectively tackle the challenge of instability in Syria and destroy the poisonous ideology of ISIS. We are grateful for the engagement and the commitment of Cyprus in the coalition of nations that is seeking to achieve that end”.

Visit by German Foreign Minister

The Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier paid an official visit to Cyprus on **17 November 2015** and was received by President Anastasiades at the presidential palace. Following this meeting, the Government Spokesman said that the meeting was lengthy and added that “in addition to the Cyprus problem they discussed the EU-Turkey relations, regional issues and the recent events in France. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany was in Paris

during the terrorist attacks, and was in fact in the stadium where the friendly football game between France and Germany was taking place. During today’s meeting of the President of the Republic with the German Minister of Foreign Affairs there was also discussion about the situation in the region, the Middle East, and in particular the role that the Republic of Cyprus can play in addressing problems of the region.”

Dr Steinmeier spoke to the press following his talks with Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides and noted that the main issues of their discussions were, on the one hand, the Cyprus problem, upon which Germany shows a great deal of interest in the efforts towards solving the decade-long conflict in Cyprus, and on the other hand, the tragic events in Paris.

As regards to the Cyprus problem, the German Minister, noted that Germans, like to come to Cyprus especially in times such as this, because, as a country that has suffered from a long-running division itself, “we have been closely monitoring and observe the events in Cyprus”, adding that Germany is celebrating the 25th anniversary of its reunification this year. He also said that he was briefed by both the President of the Republic and the Foreign Minister on the details of the negotiating process, and encouraged all stakeholders to continue the negotiation in the same spirit.



The German Foreign Minister is received by Foreign Minister Kasoulides at the Foreign Ministry in Nicosia.
(Photo: PIO Photographic Department)



Moreover, he expressed his happiness about the negotiation skills of both sides, noting that “all sides are aware that they have to seize this opportunity, this historic opportunity and if it would be missed it may not return. So, this is why we are very delighted and wish Cyprus best of success in the conclusion of these negotiations.” The German Minister also said that his country stands ready to share its experiences as far as the process of reunification is concerned. “Our process of reunification also was not easy. We are happy to refer and share our experiences, if you so wish, and if it is needed,” he stressed.

Asked to further detail on how Berlin could support the negotiations process in Cyprus, the German Minister noted that his presence in Cyprus, this particular time, shows his country’s solidarity to Cyprus. Germany, as he underlined, is willing to exchange its experience with Cyprus as regards the reunification process, due to the fact that the country had found itself in a similar situation in the past. Additionally, the Minister said, Berlin can offer its assistance, both at a European and a bilateral level, supporting those who can positively influence the stakeholders of the negotiating process.

President’s trips to Jordan, Israel and Palestine

During an official visit to Jordan, President Anastasiades was received on **11 November 2015** by King Abdullah II, while he also met with the Prime Minister Abdullah Nsour. Upon welcoming the President and the Cypriot delegation, King Abdullah spoke of the “tremendously warm relations” between the two countries, which celebrate 53 years of relations. “This is a relationship we cherish with tremendous pride”, the King added.

He also commended the tremendous support that Cyprus, as a member of the EU, has provided Jordan with, also adding that on the political level “the relationship has been fantastic”, while pointing out that “we would like to see the opportunities of how we can obviously strengthen our economic relations as friends and as brothers and sisters. This is a warm and family relationship that we are all treasuring”.

On his part, President Anastasiades thanked

Jordan for the warm hospitality and said that “my visit is a proof of our mutual determination to exchange views and ideas for further promoting and expanding our excellent relationship”. The President concluded his remarks by pointing out that: “I want to assure you that Jordan has a special place both in our hearts, as well as in our external policy. You can consider Cyprus as one of your Ambassadors in the EU”.

Speaking during a joint press conference after his meeting with the Jordanian Prime Minister, and replying to a question whether Cyprus can become a bridge for regional cooperation on energy, President Anastasiades said that “we can be the bridge, definitely for synergies in the area. Energy could be one of the incentives to bring peace, not a reason for increasing the differences and clashes. We are ready to play a role and to contribute towards finding the synergies on how to cooperate. That’s why we are building the trilateral cooperation between Egypt, Greece and Cyprus, the trilateral cooperation with Israel and we are building a new trilateral relationship between Jordan, Cyprus and Greece. We are trying to see whether this could be expanded to cover all the neighbouring countries in order to get the advantage of this wealth, of this blessing, in order to bring the soonest possible the prosperity we need. And in order to have prosperity we need first and above all peace and stability, and this is what we are trying to build, more ties, or enhancing ties, the strong bonds we are sharing. I am sure that there is a way, and this is what we are planning and discussing, how to build up such synergies to benefit our entire neighbourhood.”

President Anastasiades also paid official visits on 13 November 2015 to Israel and Palestine, where he was received by the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the President of Palestine, Mr Mahmoud Abbas. During both meetings the President discussed with his interlocutors issues of bilateral as well as regional interest. At the same time, President Anastasiades conveyed to Prime Minister Netanyahu a message from Mahmoud Abbas and received a message from the Israeli Prime Minister which he then conveyed to the Palestinian President during their talks in Ramallah.