

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

10 December 2015



The three leaders during the press conference following the Tripartite Meeting. (Photo: Aris Roupinas)

Tripartite cooperation with Greece and Egypt consolidated

On **9 December 2015** President Anastasiades met in Athens with Egyptian President Al-Sisi and the Greek Prime Minister Tsipras for the third Greece-Egypt-Cyprus Trilateral Summit. Prior to the tripartite meeting, bilateral meetings between the leaders and bilateral consultations between the delegations of the three countries were held, while after the trilateral summit President Anastasiades, President Sisi and Prime Minister Tsipras made statements to the press.

In his remarks, Prime Minister Tsipras pointed out that “our tripartite cooperation is a pillar of peace and stability, and it sends a message of peace and stability to the broader region. With this approach, we reviewed the latest developments on all the major international issues in the region and more broadly at the international level.

In this framework, we stressed how important it is to find a just and viable solution to the Cyprus problem on the basis of the UN decisions; important both for the people of Cyprus and the stability and security in the region.”

He further stated that “we agreed that from now on our meetings will not be characterized only by the theoretical confirmation of our common will and cooperation, but will be capped with the implementation of all that has been agreed” and added that the next tripartite meeting will take place in Cairo.

On his part, President Sisi, pointed out, inter alia, that the tripartite meeting “demonstrates the persistence of all of us to continue on our course to secure progress and development, and symbolizes our steadfast commitment for joint cooperation on the basis of a common vision, in order to safeguard security and stability in the region.”



Referring to the Cyprus problem, President Sisi said that in the course of the tripartite meeting, Egypt expressed its support “for the efforts to resolve the problem with the objective to reunite the island on the basis of the UN resolutions.”

In his own remarks, President Anastasiades said that “a common ascertainment of all three countries is that significant progress has been made until today with regard to our cooperation in the framework of the tripartite mechanism.

We, both Cyprus and Greece, affirmed that we will continue to support the relations between the EU and Egypt, particularly on issues that promote peace and stability in our region, such as the fight against terrorism, security, coping with crises and migration flows.”

President Anastasiades also thanked President Sisi and Prime Minister Tsipras for their support in the efforts to find a solution to the Cyprus problem on the basis of the UN resolutions, adding that “the European acquis, human rights, the withdrawal of the occupation forces and the termination of the anachronistic system of guarantees, must be basic ingredients of the solution.”

With regard to the Cyprus problem, he also thanked President Sisi who created a different atmosphere and a different understanding within the Islamic Conference, “something that is evident also from the resolutions of the Conference which are closer to those of the United Nations.”

President Anastasiades also added that “we also underlined our common understanding that the discovery of significant hydrocarbon deposits in the Eastern Mediterranean - including the recent discovery of the Zohr deposit in the Exclusive Economic Zone of Egypt can and must serve as a catalyst for broader cooperation at a regional level, contributing in this way to the prosperity and stability of the countries of our region,” and further pointed out that “as Mediterranean countries, we believe, in particular, in the prospect of joint exploitation of the marine sector. In this framework, following a proposal by Cyprus, we examined the prospect for the creation of a joint economic committee on issues of ‘Blue Economy’ that will be concerned with, among other issues, sea transport, research, technology and innovation, sea and coastal tourism, education and marine environment.”

Athens Declaration

As a result of the tripartite summit, the Athens Declaration was issued, which mentions that the three leaders “cognizant of the immense challenges to the stability, security and prosperity of the Eastern Mediterranean and the need for a concerted and collective response, have met in Athens, Greece, on December 9th, 2015 for the third Greece-Egypt-Cyprus Trilateral Summit, to effectively tackle these challenges and solidify the foundations of our tripartite cooperation in the years to come, building on the significant progress achieved so far.”

According to the Declaration, the “3rd Trilateral Summit underlines our well-established and continuous tripartite partnership aiming at promoting peace, stability, security and prosperity in the Eastern Mediterranean in various fields (political, economic, trade, culture, tourism). We remain committed to effectively promoting our common values and interests and continuing to work towards enhancing our tripartite consultation at all levels. This framework serves as a model for regional dialogue, including through close coordination and cooperation in the framework of multilateral fora, as well as through efforts to further promote relations between the EU and the Arab world.”

The Declaration also mentions that the three countries acknowledge the mutually beneficial nature of the European Union –Egypt relationship, as well as the the ever increasing importance of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation for the countries of the region. Moreover, it reiterates the full support of the three countries “to the comprehensive, collective and focused action of the international community towards fighting international terrorism,” and points out, inter alia, that “the increased mixed migratory flows as a result of the ongoing turmoil in our neighborhood need a holistic and comprehensive approach, addressing the roots of the problem, especially the resolution of conflicts, eradicating poverty and promoting socio-economic development.”

Moreover, through the Declaration the three countries express their strong support for the “unity and territorial integrity of Syria” as well as their serious concern about “the security situation in Libya which affects security and stability in neighboring countries.” Moreover, it is pointed out that “the situation in Yemen is



still posing a threat to the stability of the wider Middle East” and also that “the territorial integrity, sovereignty and unity of Iraq should be respected.”

The Declaration reiterates the commitment to the “two State solution which will guarantee for the Palestinian People a viable, sovereign, independent and contiguous State, on the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, living in peace and security with all its neighbors,” while it also underlines the urgent need for the election of a new President in Lebanon, given the political vacuum in the country.

With regards to the Cyprus problem, the three countries mention in the Athens Declaration that they express their “full and unwavering support to the ongoing negotiation process, under the United Nations Good Office Mission, for a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem based on international law, and the relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions. Such a settlement, which will reunify the island, based on the respect of democratic principles and the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Cypriots, would not only benefit the people of Cyprus as a whole, but would also significantly contribute to the stability and peace in the region.”

Moreover, the Declaration re-emphasizes that “the discovery of important hydrocarbon reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean, including the recent discovery of the ‘Zohr’ gas field in Egypt’s Exclusive Economic Zone, can serve as a catalyst for peace and stability in the region. This objective would be better served through the adherence by the countries of the region to well established principles of international law. Recognizing the universal character of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to which all three countries are State-Parties, we agree to accelerate negotiations on the outstanding issues related to the delimitation of our three countries’ adjacent maritime zones.”

In the conclusion of the Declaration it is mentioned that the three countries “remain convinced of the strategic nature of this trilateral cooperation and we will continue to work closely towards the fullest exploitation of its potential, to the benefit of our peoples and the wider region. In this regard, we have decided to establish a standing Joint Committee of Cooperation which will develop, formulate and promote practical projects of trilateral interest.”



Prior to the Tripartite Meeting President Anastasiades had a bilateral meeting with the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. (Photo: Aris Roupinas)