

## POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

4 December 2015



The U.S. Secretary of State during talks at the Presidential Palace with President Anastasiades and their delegations.  
(Photo: PIO Photographic Department)

### U.S. Secretary of State visits Cyprus

The Secretary of State of the United States of America Mr John Kerry paid an official visit to Cyprus on **3 December 2015** and was received by President Anastasiades at the Presidential Palace while he also had talks with his counterpart Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides. Moreover, Mr Kerry attended a dinner hosted by Lisa Buttenheim, the UN Secretary General's Special Representative in Cyprus, along with President Anastasiades, Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci and the UN Secretary General's Special Advisor on Cyprus Espen Barth Eide.

Through a post on his Tweeter account President Anastasiades described his meeting with Secretary Kerry as positive and productive, mentioning that they discussed bilateral relations, the Cyprus problem, as well as regional issues.

On his part, after concluding his contacts, Secretary Kerry made a statement to the press where he mentioned that the USA is focused on en-

couraging progress in the process of trying to bring about peace in Cyprus, also pointing out that: "In recent months, it has become clear that the ground really is shifting and tangible progress is being made. And I am more convinced than ever that a resolution to the longstanding division of Cyprus is within reach and with it the many benefits of unity for all the people of the island. It doesn't mean it will happen automatically. It's difficult, but it can be done.

My meetings today really reinforced that conviction. I met with President Anastasiades to discuss cooperation on regional threats but also the prospects for settlement. And separately, I met with Mr. Akinci, who shared his views on the settlement process."

Secretary Kerry went on to say that: "I've been impressed already today by both Nicos and Mustafa, who are working really hard for peace and making the tough and creative compromises



that this moment demands. They absolutely deserve our support and the support of all Cypriots. Both leaders underscored something that we strongly believe in the United States: Not only will a just and comprehensive and lasting solution for Cyprus have an enormously positive impact on the island, it will lift up the entire region. A lasting settlement will bring opportunities for economic growth and development all across the island. It will attract foreign investment. And with a lasting settlement to this decades-long conflict, Cyprus could also become a regional energy and commercial hub.

A united Cyprus will stand as a beacon of hope in a tumultuous part of the world at a time when people need that beacon. It will be a model for other places in search of a peaceful, multiethnic future. All you have to do is look in any direction from here and you can appreciate how much the world could use an island of peace, harmony, and prosperity in the Mediterranean right now.

That is why the international community has a responsibility to help support a settlement. It is not a burden that Cypriots should or even could shoulder alone. As I made clear in my meetings today, the United States is strongly supportive of the UN-facilitated, Cypriot-led settlement process to reunify Cyprus as a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation. And I can assure you that the United States will do our part to ensure that it is implemented, including through technical and financial assistance.”

Secretary Kerry further pointed out that: “I do fully understand how difficult it is for the people of Cyprus to put the differences of the past aside. I have met Cypriots of all ages and walks of life who have spent much of their lives in the shadow of tragic division. Yes, we must respect the past, but our focus must be on what we can change, not be prisoners of the past. Our focus needs to be on the future.

And today I have witnessed that desire for change firsthand and I have seen a real passion for peace. I just came from a youth basketball practice game, scrimmage, not far from here, and the group was called PeacePlayers – young Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots shooting hoops together. The fact is that no one has more to gain from a lasting settlement than the young people of this island. And with peace, someday that very group of kids may be

building businesses together, opening joint NGOs, or even leading this island together.”

Concluding his statement, Secretary Kerry stressed that: “So my message today is very simple: The United States is committed and will remain committed to Cyprus and to its people. And we will continue to support its leaders as they make the most of this moment, as they work towards a settlement and pursue a better future for the island. We believe this is Cyprus’s moment and we’re confident that it can be.”

## Visit by Russian Foreign Minister

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr Sergey Lavrov, paid an official visit to Cyprus on **2 December 2015**. The Russian Minister was received by President Anastasiades at the Presidential Palace and attended a lunch hosted in his honour, while he also met with his counterpart Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides.

In his address at the official lunch, President Anastasiades characterised Mr Lavrov’s visit as extremely important and “certainly timely, given the developments with regards to the Cyprus problem.” The President pointed out that “we have had today, as every time that we meet, a very constructive and substantial exchange of views. We have confirmed once more the excellent level of bilateral relations, the valuable support of the Russian Federation towards Cyprus, as well as the common understanding on crucial issues of the international agenda.

And it was evident during my recent two visits in the Russian Federation, where I held fruitful and constructive meetings with the President Mr Vladimir Putin and the Prime Minister Mr Dimitry Medvedev that our common aim is to continue and deepen our continuous dialogue and our bilateral and regional cooperation.”

He also said that “the Russian Federation once more reaffirmed its practical and traditional support to the efforts in reaching a solution to the Cyprus problem, on the basis of principles that are founded on the respect for international law, the UN Charter and the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council.



For this long-standing support, both the Government and the people of Cyprus are grateful.”

Referring to the exceptional bilateral relations between the two countries, President Anastasiades commented that their “quality and uniqueness is largely attributed to the profound knowledge and the special relationship with our country of the Head of the Russian diplomacy, my dear friend Sergey Lavrov. It is without a doubt a privilege to have a diplomat and a dignitary of the caliber of Sergey Lavrov as a close friend of our island. His political weight and the extended familiarity with our country and its political problem have been fundamental in maintaining the Cyprus issue in the right perspective. [...] At the same time, we also feel privileged that this friendship is one that transcends both at all levels of cooperation between our two Governments and people, and has not only proven resilient through time, but has steadily grown to unprecedented levels of trust and mutually beneficial cooperation.”

On his part, Mr Lavrov said that it is a great privilege to be hosted by the leader of the Republic of Cyprus, while he also reiterated Russia’s commitment to justice, international law, to the resolving of all issues peacefully, to a dialogue and consensus searching. Moreover, referring to the Cyprus problem he said that it is one of the oldest on the agenda of the international community, pointing out that Russia

is very honestly committed to continue the efforts of the international community, of the Security Council of the UN to make sure that the relevant resolutions on Cyprus are implemented, and that “these resolutions serve the basis for the two communities in Cyprus to reach a mutually acceptable decision which will not be ambiguous, which will really aim at implementing all the principles of UN decisions”.

The issues on the agenda of the discussions during the Russian Foreign Minister’s visit included, inter alia, the bilateral relations, the Cyprus problem and Russia’s role as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, Syria the situation in Ukraine, as well as other issues of mutual interest. Special emphasis was also given in the downing of the Russian bomber by the Turkish airforce and the threat of Daesh, focusing on ways to address the threat of terrorism.

Speaking during a joint Press Conference with Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides, Mr Lavrov said that: “Today we have analyzed in detail the course of the implementation of the agreement reached by our Presidents in February in Moscow, including the two Action Plans for the years 2015-2017”, adding that the discussion also focused especially on the trade and investment ties. “We think that there are good perspectives to further grow them, despite some problems in the relations between Russia and the EU. We think that



The Russian Foreign Minister with President Anastasiades at the Presidential Palace in Nicosia.  
(Photo: PIO Photographic Department)



optimization of the bilateral trade structure will enable us to broaden our trade ties, especially taken into account the interest of Russian companies show towards Cyprus”, Minister Lavrov underlined.

In relation to the Cyprus problem and the efforts for reaching a settlement, the Russian Foreign Minister reiterated his country’s consistent support to these efforts, stressing that a settlement should be the result based on the basis of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the agreement of both sides. Attempts to impose settlement plans from the outside had been taken in the past and resulted in nothing fruitful. The UN Security Council will monitor the process, encourage the sides to reach agreement and will play a role in formalising the final settlement. Any mediation has proved not to be fruitful, Minister Lavrov said. “We hope that the UN Security Council will continue its efforts to find a solid solution to the crisis”, he noted.

Concerning the threat of terrorism, Minister Lavrov expressed Russia’s appreciation for Cyprus’ support in the anti-terrorist efforts “and the fact that Cyprus supported us with the situation with Turkey, which arbitrarily brought down our aircraft”. Regarding the Russia-EU relations, Mr Lavrov thanked the Government of Cyprus for the efforts to normalize these relations.

Replying to a question on Russia’s position, as one the five Permanent Members of the UN Security Council, regarding the issue of foreign guarantees in the process of finding a solution to the Cyprus problem, Minister Lavrov stressed that the Republic of Cyprus is the one to make decisions. “And, of course, the settlement is to ensure that the security is guaranteed on a very new basis and that this basis is agreed by both communities in Cyprus. And once this agreement is found, it is the UNSC that will play the main role”, he added.

Asked to comment on the fact that a meeting with the Turkish Cypriot side was not included in his program, Minister Lavrov reassured that the Russian Federation is very well aware of the positions of both communities, pointing out that in the framework of the Security Council, Russia holds contacts with both communities. “We were ready to meet with the representatives of the Turkish Cypri-

ots, but only within the format, which is legal under the current circumstances”, Minister Lavrov underlined.

## President attends CHOGM 2015

President Anastasiades attended the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), held in Malta on **27-29 November 2015**. The meeting’s conclusions included a paragraph on the Republic of Cyprus (paragraph 33) which reads as follows:

“Heads express their full and enduring support for the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and unity of the Republic of Cyprus. They welcomed renewed efforts and the resumption of negotiations, under the auspices of the UNSG’s good offices mission, for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem based on the UN Charter, and UN Security Council resolutions on Cyprus.

Heads call for the implementation of the relevant UN SC resolutions, especially 365 (1974), 541 (1983), 550 (1984), and 1251 (1999). Heads reiterated their support for full respect of the human rights of all Cypriots, including their right to property, and for the accounting for all missing persons.

Heads extended their solidarity in the exercise of the sovereign rights of the Republic of Cyprus in its exclusive economic zone under international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and call for the avoidance of actions and statements that threaten stability in the Eastern Mediterranean.”

Moreover, during the Meeting the Commonwealth elected Cyprus to chair the newly reconstituted Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG). Guyana will serve as vice chair of the Group, which guards democracy and rights in the Commonwealth. India, Kenya, Namibia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Solomon Islands, and Malta are also part of the Group, which will serve a two-year term. Established in 1995, the CMAG assesses infringements of the Commonwealth’s shared political values, and deals with persistent or serious violations. The Group has the power to suspend a member country or even recommend expulsion from the Commonwealth.