

Lecture by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis, at the PRIO Institute, entitled "Cyprus: A Common Country - A Common Future for all Cypriots", Oslo - 05/03/2012

I am very pleased to visit PRIO again after the elapse of so many years since my tenure as Ambassador to Norway in the late 1990's. I have known PRIO and have worked with researchers from PRIO for many years and I have come to appreciate its worldwide contribution to peace through conflict resolution, dialogue and reconciliation. These have always been my personal goals in life and I feel great affinity with the tasks your Institution has been promoting for 53 years.

I have chosen to speak on an issue that is obviously of critical importance primarily for the people of Cyprus, but also for peace in the wider region of the Eastern Mediterranean and Europe itself.

Let me begin by saying that I remain a firm believer of coexistence and I cannot accept the argument that people with different religions, different language and ethnic backgrounds cannot live together and therefore have to be separated. Also, I firmly oppose the theory that because of painful experiences of the past or wrongdoings of one generation, the future generations will have to be punished.

Regarding Cyprus, I come from a generation of Cypriots that we carry in our souls and psyche the memories and experiences of coexistence. This is why I have always struggled for the reunification of Cyprus, for the reunification of our people and for the peaceful transformation of our 1960 unitary state to a federal state.

Traditional ties of friendship and cooperation, common struggles and common sufferings have characterized the relations between all the people of my country throughout the centuries, regardless of ethnic, religious or cultural background. Cyprus was and remains a beautiful mosaic of Christians and Moslems, Armenians, Maronites and Latins, Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

We are all aware of the tragic intercommunal conflicts of the 1960s and of the Turkish invasion of 1974 and the subsequent occupation of nearly 37% of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus, which brought untold suffering to our people, with the continuing Turkish military presence on the island with a 40.000 strong occupation army, with the forcible displacement, the deprivation of property, the missing, the destruction of cultural heritage and other massive violations of human rights that have affected the lives of more of one third of the population.

My intention today is not to unravel this tragic history. My intention is not to uncover the wounds and reveal the pain. I think we have done this for many years on both sides without succeeding to solve the problem. Our country and our people remain divided and this is a big shame. Our parents' generation has already gone and my generation, the last with the vivid memories of coexistence, is the only left to really wage the struggle. Young people from both communities have no experiences of living together with the other community. On the opposite, the only thing they know is the current status quo of separation and division.

Therefore, my intention today is to try to strike a note of hope and optimism for the future of Cyprus, despite the rather gloomy situation prevailing currently regarding the negotiations for the reunification of the island.

The renewal of the bonds of friendship and cooperation between the two communities is of fundamental importance in the overall framework of bringing Cyprus and its people back together in their common homeland, transforming it into a haven of peace and prosperity within the broader family of states we call the European Union. For us, this would be a win-win scenario for all the key players involved: for the United Nations Organization, the EU, for Greece

and Turkey and above all, Cyprus and the Cypriots themselves.

The necessary precondition for the realization of this win-win scenario is, of course, the finding of a negotiated settlement of the Cyprus problem.

The outline of the settlement has been clear enough for many years and was reaffirmed before the start of the current negotiation process, in September 2008, by the President of Cyprus Mr Christofias and the former Turkish Cypriot leader Mr Talat. This outline is best described in a quotation from the UN Security Council resolution 1251 of 1999, which has been repeated in numerous other resolutions and reads as follows:

“...A Cyprus settlement must be based on a state of Cyprus with a single sovereignty and international personality and a single citizenship, with its independence and territorial integrity safeguarded, and comprising two politically equal communities, as defined in the relevant Security Council resolutions in a bi-communal and bi-zonal federation and that such a settlement must exclude union in whole or in part with any other country or any form of partition or secession...”.

Regrettably, since September 2008, despite more than 130 meetings between President Christofias and Mr Talat first and now Mr Eroglu, as well as five direct meetings with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, progress in the current negotiation process has been quite limited in almost all chapters of what are considered as the internal aspects of the Cyprus problem, namely governance, property, territory, economic matters, EU issues and citizenship. In fact, since May 2010, when the new leader of the Turkish Cypriots was elected, a serious worsening of the situation occurred, because of the distancing on the part of the new Turkish Cypriot leader from positions where convergences had been reached between President Christofias and Mr Talat. This is very unfortunate and is indicative of an intention to halt progress and not to allow the process to move forward.

The crucial question we have to answer that would have a bearing on our future is: are we or are we not one people, Cypriots, belonging to one country, Cyprus, with one citizenship and one international identity? The agreed basis of the solution of the Cyprus problem, and by that I mean the basis which has been agreed for some time by both communities under the auspices of the UN, reaffirms that yes - we are one people, one country, hold a common citizenship and have one international identity as a country.

But, far from this being merely legal terminology, it touches the essence of our identity, and therefore our being. Consequently, this human element cannot be ignored if we are going to be truly reconciled on the island –our common homeland.

Another thorny issue that is highly emotional and one directly linked to identity and roots, is the issue of property and the territorial adjustments that are required as part of genuine reconciliation. We must never forget that this island has a 10.000-year-old history and the people are deeply rooted and firmly attached to their birthplaces and where their ancestors have lived for centuries. Therefore, the right to ownership and the right to return is of paramount importance and should be safeguarded. Owners of property and displaced persons should have the first option and should be able to choose whether they wish to return and reestablish themselves in their former homes and whether they want to have their property reinstated, compensated or exchanged. Practical arrangements could be found for the current users should the owners decide to have their properties reinstated.

It has always been recognized that there will be territorial adjustments and that in the majority of cases the issues of property and return will most likely be resolved with territorial adjustments. This has so far been rejected by the Turkish side during the current process of negotiations -and this is a very disheartening development, not only for the negotiators on our side but also for the

Greek Cypriot community, which will eventually be asked to vote in support of a final settlement. Declarations by the Turkish leaders that Greek Cypriots should forget about Varosha, about Morphou and about Karpassia are not helpful and worsen the perception that the Turkish side does not want a solution.

Of course there are other important issues pertaining to the internal aspects of the problem, such as the question of citizenship, that is settlers, the question of the executive power and other questions pertaining to the issue of governance, as well as pending aspects on the economy and European Union Chapters that remain unresolved, thus, hindering the recourse to an international conference for discussing and finding a solution to the international aspects of the Cyprus problem.

The questions of the withdrawal of the Turkish troops, security and the future of the three so-called guarantor powers –Turkey, Greece and the United Kingdom– in Cyprus are the Chapters pertaining to the international aspects of the Cyprus problem. Given the fact that Turkey, Greece and the UK are all, to varying degrees, entangled in them, the most fitting forum for the discussion of these international elements of the Cyprus problem has always been an international conference.

Recognizing this, President Christofias proposed in July 2010 that, once convergences were achieved on what are called in the negotiations the internal dimensions of the problem, an international conference should be convened to address issues as security and guarantees, and the presence of foreign troops, with the participation of Turkey, Greece and the UK, the UN, the EU, the Republic of Cyprus and the two communities.

President Christofias' proposal has to a large extent been adopted by the Secretary-General of the UN and the Security Council itself calling, in Resolution 2026 (2011), for all internal aspects of a settlement to be resolved before convening, with the consent of the two sides, an international conference. President Christofias has made it expressly clear that he remains fully committed to such a procedure.

It ought to be absolutely clear that, should it prove unfeasible to convene an international conference in the coming weeks, as a result of the Turkish Cypriot leader's lack of willingness to negotiate in good faith and within the framework of the agreed basis and reach agreement on the internal aspects, as was the wish expressed by the UN Secretary General following the Greentree meeting in New York last January, the Secretary-General's efforts in the context of his Good Offices mission must continue in line with the mandate assigned to him by the Security Council of the United Nations. In any case, the UN Security Council remains the only body of the UN responsible to decide on how to move forward.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The central question now facing us is what must be done in order to move forward?

The hard truth is that the quickest way to a solution in Cyprus would be a dramatic change of course on the part of Turkey. Such change of course would entail the support on the part of the Turkish leadership for a solution in line with international law, the EU acquis, EU values and norms and an agreed basis for a settlement already delineated by the United Nations in its Security Council resolutions. If such a change takes place it would pay huge dividends for all involved, especially for Turkey.

For Turkey, it would immediately create new momentum in its EU accession negotiations and lead to the unfreezing of many chapters that have remained blocked as a result of Turkey's non compliance with her obligations vis-à-vis Cyprus. It should be easily appreciated that the quickest way for Turkey to reboot its European aspirations is to contribute in concrete terms to

the settlement of the Cyprus problem which is, incidentally, also an obligation that Turkey assumed vis-à-vis the EU. At the same time, I'm sure you would agree that Turkey cannot seriously expect to join the EU for as long as it remains an occupier of European territory in Cyprus.

For the United Nations Organization, the settlement of the Cyprus problem would obviously represent a momentous achievement. It would, of course, send a signal worldwide that the Organization is very much relevant, as well as effective, in successfully tackling conflicts and crises, even ones which may have appeared to be unsolvable for far too long.

For the European Union, a settlement which would not deviate from its values and norms would enhance its influence, its soft power if you like, as a key international actor contributing to peace, prosperity and regional cooperation. Furthermore, Cyprus' peaceful reunification would upgrade its inescapable bridgehead role as the EU's south-easternmost border at the crossroads of a region whose geopolitical significance is beyond doubt.

Speaking of the wider region of the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, and before I move on to the benefits for those who stand to gain the most, and are entitled to gain the most, the people of Cyprus, allow me to make a linkage between regional benefits and the new prospects for hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation in Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), as well as in the corresponding zones of our neighbours.

There are now confirmed surveys indicating that the Levant Basin alone holds an estimated 122 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of natural gas and 1.7 billion barrels of oil. The Nile Delta Basin holds an estimated 223 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of natural gas, 1.8 billion barrels of oil and 6 billion barrels of natural gas liquids. These huge prospects represent a tectonic shift in the crucial matter of energy security, both for our corner of the world, but also for all of Europe. It also translates into an unprecedented wealth that carries with it benefits for all the countries of the region, primarily Lebanon, Israel, Egypt and Cyprus, whose EEZ's are included in these two hydrocarbon rich Basins of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Turning to the benefits that will accrue for Cyprus and its people from our country's peaceful reunification, and directly linked to the issue I have just discussed, allow me to underline again, in the strongest possible terms, that the prosperity that will result from any hydrocarbon deposits in the Cypriot EEZ belongs to all Cypriots. All Cypriots, Greek and Turkish Cypriots alike, will stand to benefit from such exploitation following reunification for many generations to come. This commitment has been reiterated first and foremost by President Christofias from the very podium of the UN General Assembly and by many other government officials on many occasions and there should be no room for doubt anywhere. As such, the continuation of Turkey's threats and provocations, which I am heartened to note have found nothing but rejection in the international community, is quite unfortunate and entirely misplaced.

Independently of this relatively recent dimension, we never tire of trying to convince of the wide range of positive effects that reunification will bring about for the people of Cyprus. Namely:

- Security, an aspect on which all Cypriots attach particular emphasis, will be ensured and safeguarded. Cyprus' membership in the European Union, which remains the greatest peace project in the history of mankind, provides the backbone of that security with democracy, liberty, respect for human rights and the rule of law being at the very core of Europe's *raison d'être*.
- Greek and Turkish Cypriots in a reunified state and its federal Government, fully participating in all the decision-making mechanisms of the EU, will contribute to the shaping of policies and decisions that will have a positive bearing on the interests of Cyprus as a whole and the welfare and advancement of all its people.

- The restoration of full respect for the human rights of all Cypriots will finally correct an anomaly that has lasted for far too long as a result of Turkey's occupation and which remains, as of now, a serious blight in the historical record of the universal application of these rights.
- The re-establishment and strengthening of the fraternal ties between all Cypriots, as was the case for many centuries, in conditions of peaceful-coexistence and ethnic, religious and cultural acceptance.
- In economic terms, the country as a whole, in both the short and the long-term, will further prosper by the consolidation of a stable economic environment, with increased opportunities in many economic fields, including tourism, investments and trade, thus further upgrading Cyprus's global competitiveness prospects. Normalizing relations with Turkey will provide a big boost to such opportunities opening up the huge Turkish market for Cyprus exports and other services.
- For our Turkish Cypriot compatriots, reunification will mean raising of their income and living standards and more economic opportunities in all fields. Turkish Cypriot businesses will flourish in the new European environment as a result of easy access to the huge EU market, while the Turkish Cypriot community will surely be afforded the tremendous opportunity to catch up with EU standards through the Union's structural funds programs.
- One should also not underestimate the knock-on effect that the island's economic development in conditions of peace will have on the possible repatriation of many Cypriots, including at least 50 thousand Turkish Cypriots who moved abroad after 1974 in light of the suffocating political and economic conditions prevailing in the occupied part of Cyprus.

For all the aforementioned reasons, I remain firmly convinced that the prospect of re-unification of Cyprus, its people and its institutions, in conditions of peace and security, for the common benefit of all Cypriots, with adherence to the principles and values that are the EU's very foundations, is a win-win scenario for all the actors involved, presenting only pluses and no minuses.

We owe it to the future generations of Greek, Turkish, Armenian, Maronite and Latin Cypriots who should have a better and more secure life in a united, peaceful, democratic and prosperous home. This is the common future for all Cypriots in their common country Cyprus that we are firmly and tirelessly committed to. I urge PRIO to help us in every possible way to make this vision a reality. I urge PRIO to focus on projects that will prepare the Cypriots for the blessed moment that their country will be reunited and they will be able to live together in their common homeland, sharing a common future for all Cypriots. This is not an utopia. Not only can we achieve this goal, but we have an obligation to succeed. What is needed is vision and determination. Other countries with even more entrenched and deeply rooted problems have been able to succeed. Why not the Cypriots?