

Speech by H.E. the High Commissioner of the Republic of Cyprus Mr. Petros T. Nacouzis at the Celebration of the 52nd Anniversary of the Independence of the Republic of Cyprus, held in Pretoria on 5 October 2012

Your Eminence, Archbishop of Johannesburg and Pretoria

Ms Selly Ramokgopa, Director Mediterranean Europe of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation representing the Government of the Republic of South Africa

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners

President of the Cyprus Brotherhood of South Africa

My fellow compatriots,

Ladies and gentlemen

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the residence of the Republic of Cyprus to celebrate together the 52nd Anniversary of the Independence of the Republic of Cyprus. Independence is the most important accomplishment of the people of Cyprus as the island throughout its long history was most of the time under foreign occupation. Unfortunately, we celebrate once again our Independence Day in a divided country. After 14 years of prosperity, the 1974 Turkish invasion and occupation of 36,4% of our country and the forcible movement of populations by the occupying power based on ethnic origin criteria is causing a lot of suffering to the Cypriot people. The demographic character of our occupied territory has changed through the years with the influx of more than 200.000 settlers from Anatolia while our cultural and religious heritage is deliberately under systematic destruction.

Our steadfast objective remains the withdrawal of all occupation troops and the reunification of the island, in the context of a bizonal, bicomunal federation, with political equality as defined in the UN Resolutions. One state with a single sovereignty, single citizenship and single international personality. To this end, the relevant UN resolutions and the EU principles and values, provide a clear framework for a comprehensive settlement, agreed upon by the two communities. The inability to reach an agreement is not the result of the agreed basis for a solution but the refusal of Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot leadership to cooperate towards such a solution. They promote a solution of two states in the island and they do not move from their intransigent stance in all the core issues of the Cyprus problem.

The official relations between the Governments of the Republic of Cyprus and the Republic of South Africa started after the end of apartheid by the signing of the Protocol for the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations on 10 December 1993. Ever since, the

two countries share cordial relations, based on common historical experiences and the mutual adherence to global values of peace, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. A major building block for this friendship and cooperation has proved to be the membership in the Commonwealth and the United Nations where the two countries actively cooperate.

The relations between the peoples of Cyprus and South Africa go back to the end of the 19th century when the first Cypriots started coming to this beautiful and hospitable country for a better future. In 1934 the Cyprus Brotherhood of South Africa was founded in Johannesburg in order to promote the interests, welfare and well-being of all Cypriots residing in South Africa. The Cyprus Brotherhood can still play an important role for the benefit of our community and I urge all my compatriots to support it.

More than 50.000 people came to South Africa from Cyprus in different periods, the last were the ones that came from the occupied part of Cyprus, mainly from the Famagusta District. The Cypriots of South Africa worked very hard and they succeeded becoming a very active, vibrant and influential community, fully integrated in the South African society, contributing to its social, economic and multicultural development.

Today, our community in South Africa numbers around 25.000 people. It gives me a great pleasure in attending the events of the various Hellenic communities in the country where my compatriots are actively involved and meeting personally each one of them. I always tell them that with their activities they are the best Ambassadors of Cyprus to South Africa and I urge them to maintain their identity through the learning of our language and their active participation to the communities' activities. I assure them that the Cyprus High Commission will be close to the Cypriot community and offer the best consular assistance.

During the apartheid period Cyprus imposed sanctions against the racist regime and through its participation in the Non-Aligned Movement supported actively the struggle of the people of South Africa for the establishment of democracy in the country. Dr. Vassos Lyssarides, the veteran Cypriot politician, served as President of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Movement (AAPSO) and as head of the International Committee in Solidarity with South Africa. The second organization was always in close collaboration with the ANC and worked vigorously for the release of Nelson Mandela from the prison and for the end of apartheid. Committees were formed in most countries in Europe as well as in some African countries and campaigns were organised. Oliver Tambo, Acting President of the ANC, visited Cyprus many times being invited by Dr. Lyssarides and they cooperated in various international meetings.

Exactly two weeks ago, the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa Mrs Maite Nkoana-Mashabane paid an official visit to Cyprus at the invitation of her Cypriot counterpart Dr. Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis. That visit was characterised as historical as it was the first visit of a South African Foreign Minister in Cyprus since our independence in 1960. At the official talks, decisive steps have been taken to deepen the institutional framework of the bilateral relations through the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on Bilateral Political Consultations that provides for regular consultations on important bilateral and multilateral issues. Moreover, ways

have been discussed to diversify our bilateral relations in various fields such as merchant Shipping, tourism, business and trade, sports, health, agriculture and culture. A significant number of bilateral agreements are pending and both sides gave assurances to work hard so that most of these agreements are signed in January 2013 during the official visit to South Africa of the Cypriot Foreign Minister Dr. Kozakou-Marcoullis.

2012 is a significant year for both countries. For South Africa the most important event was the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the African National Congress, the oldest liberation movement in Africa. Its charismatic leaders will always be remembered for their significant contribution through peaceful means to bring an end to the oppression and discrimination of the apartheid regime and to establish a free and democratic South Africa.

The Republic of Cyprus which still bears the consequences of the violations of the rule of law will stand together with the Republic of South Africa to work constructively for the promotion of peace, freedom, democracy and prosperity in the world.

Cyprus assumed from 1st July the presidency of the Council of the European Union. We are fully committed to a successful presidency because we believe that a successful presidency has nothing to do with the size of the country. On this occasion cultural events are organized in many countries. We have the pleasure to have here tonight the famous Cypriot singer of traditional Cypriot music Mr. Michalis Terlikkas with his music troupe "Mousa" (muse) which performs solely on traditional Cypriot instruments and gives concerts both in Cyprus and abroad. The other members of "Mousa" are Mr. Costas Karpasitis, Mr. Nicos Souroullas and Mr. Yiannis Souroullas.

"Mousa" enjoys particular distinction for its stalwart dedication to the ethos and expression of Cyprus' traditional music. It features quite a rich repertoire, constantly enhanced through the research and listening experiences of Michalis Terlikkas. Despite the fact that not all members have been the recipients of formal music education, they implement the truly traditional method for learning new songs: the auditory method.

Michalis Terlikkas was born in the currently occupied village of Kapouti near Morphou in 1955, where he lived until the 1974 Turkish Invasion. Singing since childhood, his life in a par excellence rural community, his contact with simple folk, his authentic aural and life experiences, all helped form a solid foundation and motive for him to busy himself systematically with the traditional songs of Cyprus.

In the beginning of his career, he took Byzantine Music lessons. He has appeared on a number of radio and television programmes both in Cyprus and abroad, while he has also participated in many folk music festivals as well as in other international events.

This official reception would not have been so successful without the generous contribution of a number of entities and individuals. I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the following:

The Cyprus Brotherhood of South Africa

Mr. Panayiotis Gerolemou
Mr. Michalis Flourentzou of Bon Appetite Juices
Mr. Minas Ioannou of Café 41 Hazelwood
The Lazarides Family of Ocean Basket
The Avraamides Family of Bread Basket
Mr. Alex Jacovides of Clippa Sales and
Mrs. Androulla Christodoulou

I would also like to thank my colleagues at the High Commission who worked hard for the success of this event. Our Consular Officer Mrs. Elena Christoforou and the Consul Mr. Pieros Pieri.

I would like now to ask you to join me in a toast for the good health, happiness and success of H.E. the President of the Republic of South Africa Mr. Jacob Zuma and for the prosperity and progress of the people of South Africa.