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| **Introductory statement of the President of the Republic, Mr Nicos Anastasiades, at the press conference on the Cyprus problem**  12/02/2014 |
| Fellow compatriots,   I have repeatedly stated that the people should be kept abreast of all serious issues that affect its prosperity and future. In this respect, there is no need to repeat what is self-evident: The unresolved Cyprus problem, that has kept our homeland and our people divided for forty years, is the most important problem that the older and younger generations have been concerned with, and should today’s status quo continue, this will, in my view, dramatically affect the future of the generations to come.   Today’s press conference aims exclusively at informing as well as restoring the truth with respect to the joint declaration, based on the actual facts that create the preconditions for the re-launching of a round of talks, with the hope of putting a definitive end to the prevalent unacceptable situation.   I wish to state, right from the beginning, and make it clear that the analysis of the provisions of the joint declaration shall not be done in a manner of confrontation with the political forces and the politicians that have an opposite view, which I have to say that I absolutely respect   Both during the pre-election period and with the assumption of power, I had stated that I would work tirelessly so as to successfully address the country’s economic problems and modernize the state, but at the same time, through collective effort, to find at last and definitely a solution that would free our country from occupation, reunite it and restore the human rights and basic freedoms of our people as whole.   A solution that will be based on the high-level agreements and the relevant United Nations decisions and resolutions, which will ensure its duration, viability and functionality, as well as the implementation of the principles and values of the EU, of which Cyprus is a member state since 2004.  You are all aware of the conditions under which I assumed the Presidency. For this reason priority was first given to addressing the economic crisis, since an economically enfeebled country could be vulnerable to pressure or even blackmail, that would negatively affect the effort to achieve a decent and as just as possible solution.  Through strict adherence to the terms of the loan agreement, the stabilization of our banking system and the indisputable sacrifices and obstinacy of our people, without claiming that we have overcome the economic crisis, and following the positive evaluations of both our creditors and foreign rating agencies, I judged that the economic recovery was pertinent to focusing our attention to the intensification of efforts to resolve the Cyprus problem.   Parallel to addressing the economic problems, we have applied a policy of reinstating prestige and credibility, as well as utilizing the possibilities stemming from our country’s geostrategic position. In the time that has passed we managed to upgrade and deepen our relations with the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel and the total of our European partners. The policy we have followed – and I wish to stress it – has not in the least affected the excellent and friendly relations we maintained and maintain with great powers such as Russia and China and with the Arab states.   Our policy’s axis was the utilization of the interest of countries that have interests in our region and can affect developments, by highlighting that a solution to the Cyprus problem would significantly contribute not only to stability but also to peace in the region, as well as to the possibility of exploitation of the natural wealth of the Eastern Mediterranean.   At the same time and in order to create the necessary preconditions for a substantive dialogue, we have worked hard to reposition the Cyprus problem through our request for Turkey’s active involvement as the power which continues to occupy the northern part of our homeland.   Aiming at lifting the pretexts raised, we moved to the appointment of a negotiator of the Greek Cypriot community, despite the other side’s objections, and for the first time since 1974 we managed to engage Turkey into the talks.   Besides, in order to achieve a solution compatible with the European principles and values and the acquis communautaire, in consecutive contacts with the Presidents of the EU’s three institutions as well as with european government leaders, the upgrade of EU’s role in the dialogue being resumed was finally achieved, as clearly shown from the press release issued by the President of the European Council, Mr Herman Van Rompuy, and the President of the European Commission, Mr Jose Manuel Barroso.  At the same time and in order to create a new impetus in a new round of talks, we submitted a series of substantive confidence building measures, which, following arduous efforts on our part, have not only been understood but also, as shown by the content of the numerous press releases that followed the adoption of the joint declaration, its seems that they will constitute one of the priorities of friendly countries.   During the initiative we have undertaken, it became evident that there was a divergence as regards the role that, in our view, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Adviser should play. Through delicate but also decisive handling we managed to overcome the problem without compromising the procedure.   Fellow compatriots,  Taking into consideration the experiences of the past and in order to fully clarify the positions, the basic principles of the solution of the Cyprus problem and the methodology to be followed in a new round of talks, we have set the issuing of joint declaration as a prerequisite.   After six months of arduous efforts we achieved to conclude to the Joint Declaration of 11 February. A Declaration which, without neglecting the other side’s concerns satisfies our own pursuits and sensitivities.   I ought to be completely honest and admit that the political leaders and the National Council have significantly contributed to the attainment of the above goal, whom I thank in their entirety, since, even through their objections, they have contributed to successfully addressing the other side’s demands that we did not agree with. I also ought to warmly thank the Greek Government which was continuously kept informed on the developments, on a daily basis, and provided its full support for our efforts.   I should also extend my warm thanks to the group of lawyers pointed out by the parliamentary parties, which has decisively contributed to the formation of the final content of the text.   I should also mention that throughout the consultations we were in constant contact with two of the most prestigious foreign law firms, the services of which have been also used by previous Governments.  Also, it would be an omission not to acknowledge the positive role played by friendly countries with influence in the decision-making centres that have a say and a role in the Cyprus problem.  Fellow compatriots,  I am aware that the political parties that had disagreed either with the procedure or the methodology, still maintain their views. What saddens me is not the existence of a disagreement but the repeated references that have nothing to do with the content of the declaration but possibly with political choices that are not in agreement with the pursued form of solution.  Without any intent, I repeat, to confront those who disagree, I present for the accurate information of the Cypriot people, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, what the joint declaration comprises and what we have safeguarded to resume the talks so that if the other side also demonstrates the same good will, there will be prospect for a successful outcome.  Specifically, the following are provided in the Joint Declaration:  1. The existing situation, meaning the status quo, is considered by both leaders as unacceptable. Unacceptable, inter alia, are considered to be the presence of occupying forces, the continuing division of our country, the illegal exploitation of Greek Cypriot properties, the violation of human rights and basic freedoms, the settlement, the destruction of religious and cultural heritage, the need that drives Greek Cypriots to bargain away their properties in the occupied areas, the alienation of Cypriot Hellenism from their ancestral homes and the consolidation, in essence, of the faits accomplis of the invasion (Paragraph 1).  2. It is foreseen that the solution will respect the basic principles, the human rights and the fundamental freedoms and will safeguard a common future for all citizens in a united Cyprus within the EU.  3. The principles and the values on which the EU is based will be safeguarded and will be respected in the entire territory of the Republic of Cyprus or the Federal Republic that will be created (Paragraph 4).  4. Equally important, not to say the most important, is that in the united Cyprus the three basic principles, distinctive features of every UN member state are safeguarded. United Cyprus, as a member of the UN and the EU will have a single international legal personality, a single sovereignty and a single citizenship (Paragraph 3).  5. Any kind of strict timeframes are excluded simply with the phrase that the two leaders will work towards finding a solution as soon as possible (Paragraph 3).  6. The principle that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed is adopted (Paragraph 5).  7. Any kind of arbitration is excluded and that only an agreement that will be based on the free will of the parties will be brought to a referendum (Paragraph 6).  8. Union in whole or in part with any other country or any form of partition or secession or any other unilateral change to the state of affairs is explicitly and unambiguously forbidden (Paragraph 4).  9. Law hierarchy is safeguarded, since it is explicitly mentioned that the Federal Constitution shall be the supreme law of the land and will be binding on all the federation's authorities and on the constituent states (Paragraph 4).  10. It is explicitly defined that when the competencies of the Federal Government are agreed, any remaining power, that is the residual powers, will be assigned to the states by the Federal Constitution. I must stress that these powers concern internal competencies, like for example, education, the health system, social insurance etc. This decentralization is in accordance with the European principle of subsidiarity, meaning the assignment of more powers for citizens’ everyday issues to the local authorities. This also happens with our current efforts to upgrade the powers of Local Authorities. It should also be noted that this is fully consistent with what is applied in the vast majority of federal states (Paragraph 3).  11. It is safeguarded that the constituent states do not have any sovereignty or pre-existing right of an independent state like some claim, but the status they gain as components (constituent states) of the federation, as it is defined by the federal Constitution. It is enough to mention that in the Joint Declaration it is explicitly provided that the talks are taking place between the two communities and, of course, not between any state entities (Paragraph 4).  12. It is also provided that any differences between the Federal State and the constituent states and/or the states amongst them, they will be adjudicated finally by the Federal Constitutional Court, as it happens in all federal states (Paragraph 3).  13. The reference to mutual respect and the safeguarding of the national, religious and cultural identity and integrity of every citizen of the Federal State does not concern only the Turkish Cypriot community but safeguards the survival of Cypriot Hellenism. It also does not grant, as some claim, sovereign rights but simply safeguards the agreed political equality (Paragraph 1).  14. A new methodology is established, according to which during the talks, the discussion of various substantial aspects will take place interrelated and parallel and therefore the practice of the past to concentrate the entire dialogue on a specific substantial aspect is avoided (Paragraph 2).  15. Our position for the need to adopt substantial confidence building measures is accepted, which will provide a new dynamic to the prospect for a united Cyprus, something that now reflects the views of important players of the international community (Paragraph 7).  16. Finally, I would like to reiterate that the Joint Declaration does not constitute a solution, but the basic parameters within which a final solution will be sought and which will result, not from any intervention, but from the free will of the parties and will be put before the sovereign people who will decide finally through referenda (Paragraphs 2 and 4).  Fellow compatriots,  My position is well known that I would not accept the commencement of a new cycle of talks if the basic principles were not met, which must guide the form of the state under evolvement. Beyond the provisions already mentioned, the majority of which are included in agreements or high level statements for the very first time, I had set as a precondition the safeguarding of three components of every internationally recognized state, the so called three singles. And I make special reference to these three basic characteristics, because, unfortunately, the past few days I observe a systematic effort to misinterpret or question the accuracy of the content of the Joint Declaration.  Specifically: A. A single international personality The single international legal personality is so clearly formulated that it cannot and does not allow any other interpretation. The precise wording of the text of the Joint Declaration mentions, and I quote, that “The united Cyprus, as a member of the United Nations and of the European Union, shall have a single international legal personality…” (Paragraph 3).  B. A single sovereignty  The second element in doubt is the claim that sovereignty is divided in three and this because in the Joint Declaration, the single sovereignty, the way this is defined by the UN Charter, will be emanated equally by the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots.  Allow me to mention that those who express this position confuse the sovereignty of the federal state with the powers and competencies that obligatorily assigned by the Constitution to the constituent states on matters, I repeat, of internal competencies.  The representation of the country abroad, or the conclusion of international agreements will of course take place by the state which has a single international personality and a single sovereignty. Both must be combined and not separated.  Powers and competencies of the states which will be assigned by the federal constitution, after the sectors of competencies of the central government are agreed and defined by the Federal Constitution.  Additionally, I would like to mention that the fact that sovereignty stems equally from the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots and not by the two communities like we have accepted in the past, in my view, must be considered an achievement since it refers to the constituent elements that make up the Cypriot people and not to the communities the way they are recognized by the Constitution of 1960. Therefore, no sovereignty is given separately to citizens that make up the people of a country.  The provision for separate simultaneous referenda also argues the supposedly existence of a separate sovereignty. I wish to underline that the Joint Declaration is not the first text with a reference to separate simultaneous referenda. The same occurred in practice in the referendum in 2004, under the presidency of late Tassos Papadopoulos.   It is worth to call to mind that even with the provisions of the Constitution of 1960, beyond the other rights granted to the Turkish-Cypriot community, the right to vote and stand was exercised by the Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots separately, through separate electoral registers.  I should also stress that such allegations are unfounded since the state exists and will not be established. What will occur is its evolution into a federation, and therefore the right given to the two communities is neither a sovereign nor a founding one. It is, simply, a constitutional one.  III. Single State Citizenship  Controversy or concerns are also expressed regarding the single united state citizenship. To reply, I would like to point out the following:  Based on the verbatim of the Joint Declaration: “There will be a single united Cyprus citizenship, regulated by federal law. All citizens of the united Cyprus shall also be citizens of either the Greek-Cypriot constituent state or the Turkish-Cypriot constituent state. This status will be internal and shall complement, and not substitute in any way, the united Cyprus citizenship” (Paragraph 3 of the Joint Declaration).  Consequently, it is clear that no-one can acquire “internal citizenship” of either constituent state, unless they are primarily citizens of united Cyprus based on the Federal Law.  I will note that a relevant provision also exists in the current constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, based on which no-one can become a member of either the Greek or the Turkish, according to the Constitution, community, unless they are citizens of the Republic of Cyprus. Namely, the constituent states are not allowed to grant internal citizenship to a citizen, who is not primarily a citizen of the federal state. That is, based on the federal law, a person should firstly be a Cypriot citizen, and then to gain the citizenship of one of the two constituent states.  Moreover, it is being clarified that the reference to the “internal citizenship” is made in order to protect the right of the political equality of the two constituent states, because the solution provides that the evolution of the current united state will lead to a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation with political equality between the two constituent states.  It is evident that in order to ensure political equality, as stated in the Declaration, it should be ensured that those drawing the origin from the specific constituent state, the national origin, should have the citizenship of the specific state to be allowed to vote for Congress, where it is required to ensure political equality.   Not only do I disagree with the view that the internal citizenship entails the risks of legalisation of ethnic cleansing, but instead, in my view, it advocates and reinforces our struggle to safeguard the right of our refugees to return and re-settle, since their re-settlement will not cause dangers of alteration of the right of political equality of the two constituent states. It is clear that the vote right for the Upper House or the Congress, with which the political equality is ensured, will be exercised not based on the place of residence, but the citizenship of each one of the two constituent states.  It is important that all three “singles”, namely the single international personality, the single sovereignty and the single united citizenship, will be included in the Federal Constitution, which according to the Joint Declaration provisions: “…shall be the supreme law of the land and will be binding on all the federation’s authorities and the constituent states”.  IV. Evolution of the Republic of Cyprus  The phobic position is being posed that supposedly, through the provisions of the Joint Declaration, the Turkish position is adopted, that the united Cyprus will result by the consolidation of two co-founding states.  There is no reference in the Joint Declaration on the preexisting or founding or co-founding states. On contrary, it is explicitly stated that the talks are being conducted between the leaders of two communities, that even the two constituent states are resulted by the Federal Constitution with an explicit provision, which provides that the federation will be constituted by two constituent states. Namely, the constituent states do not preexist in order to join or co-sign or co-establish a state that exists.  In addition to the above, I would add the following:  i. The EU Accession Treaty provides that the accession refers to the entire territory of the Republic of Cyprus, suspended the implementation of the acquis in the non government controlled area, clearly acknowledging the illegality of the occupying regime.  ii. In the Joint Declaration, it is also quoted that: “The united Cyprus, as a member of the United Nations and of the European Union, shall…”.  Of the aforementioned, it becomes clear that not only the parthenogenesis is not accepted, but on contrary, the continuation of the Republic of Cyprus is ensured in the evolving form of the new status quo, namely the federal structure.  If the contrary was occurred, new application would be required for the country to become a member of the UN, as well as a new application and arduous negotiation for EU accession. There is no such requirement, on the contrary, it foresees the United Cyprus as member of the United Nations and of the European Union.  Fellow Compatriots,  Concluding, I wish to reiterate that the Joint Declaration does not constitute the solution, but it sets the fundamental principles and the framework in which we will rely to reach the solution. As I said in the beginning, the arduous preparation of the Joint Declaration and the avoidance of the unacceptable demands of the other side were also achieved with the contribution of those disagreed and with the help of distinguished lawyers, recommended by the parliamentary parties.  Addressing the political leadership of the country and fully respecting the various views, I call on them, in response to the common wish of all Greek-Cypriots, to join forces with us for what is to follow, because it is well known that the Joint Declaration is not the final solution but the beginning of an arduous effort in order to reach the reunification of our country.  Moreover, addressing our Turkish-Cypriot compatriots, I wish to reassure them that my sincere intention and wish is the solution of the Cyprus problem the soonest, in a way that will restore human rights and fundamental freedoms for all the citizens of the Republic of Cyprus.  A solution with no winners or losers, or the possibility for the one side to impose its power to the other, providing the opportunity of co-existence, co-creation and prosperity in a modern European state. |