



PRESS AND INFORMATION OFFICE



▲ PRESS RELEASES

Speech by the President of the Republic, Mr Nicos Anastasiades, at the United Nations General Assembly, in New York

26/09/2013

Mr President,
Mr Secretary General,
Excellencies,

It is a great honour to address this august body for the first time in my capacity as President of the Republic of Cyprus.

And I wish initially to congratulate Mr John Ashe on his election as President of the 68th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations and to avail myself of this opportunity to convey my delegation's full support in the exercise of his high duties.

Mr President,

While it is realistic and pragmatic to acknowledge that in an anarchic international system the political and economic leverage and might of states or even international organizations is asymmetric and unequal, one should never forget the founding principles of the Charter of this Organization. Principles formulated as a result of the traumatic historic experiences of two World Wars.

Having in mind the aim of promoting the fundamental UN principles, I would like to share with you my deep concern of what is happening in various parts of the world, threatening the sovereignty of states, as well as regional and global stability, through, amongst others:

- Acts of state violence;
- Acts of terrorism;
- Infringement and calling into question sovereign rights enjoyed by states;
- Annexation of territories through illegal use of force;
- Production and use of weapons of mass destruction;
- Sponsoring and harboring of secessionist or terrorist movements;
- Religious fundamentalism manifested through terrorist attacks;
- Forcible displacement of millions of people;
- Hunger and distress which intensify migration flows and create demographic changes.

These are just but a few examples which bear out the necessity, through collective debate and self-assessment, to evaluate if the UN principles, values and methods have indeed contributed to what we all have been hoping for: Maintenance of peace and security and respect for the fundamental freedoms and human rights of all people.

I am not a romantic ideologist. Quite the contrary. I am a pragmatic realist who acknowledges that in this imperfect world it is extremely difficult, even unattainable, to expect the full and unquestioning implementation of the UN principles and values.

However, what is happening today risks to overthrow the current world order, calling into question the relevance and effectiveness of this International Organisation.

Mr President,

It is not my intention to cast doubt or minimize the multi-dimensional contribution of the United Nations in a plethora of cases during the past seven decades. What is important is to decisively enhance this Organisation's role and safeguard the effectiveness of its decisions, as well as its actions. Should decisions or resolutions based on international law or condemning violations of human rights not be implemented or enforced, then this could be seen as fostering or even rewarding arbitrariness. In this case, regional differences and conflicts can indefinitely be prolonged, serving the petty interests and expedience of their perpetrators, at the expense of international law and our universal principles. I do not intend to enter into detail of what we are witnessing and experiencing every day in different parts of the world. I will limit myself to the example of my own country, a small European country, which has, for almost 40 years, been violently divided, despite numerous UN Security Council Resolutions which call for its re-unification and the withdrawal of the occupation forces.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to assure you that, despite the current economic difficulties we are facing, I am committed to working tirelessly and with determination in reaching a viable and lasting settlement, in order for all the communities of Cyprus to live and thrive in.

A modern European country, fully respecting the values and principles of the UN and the EU, safeguarding the fundamental freedoms and human rights of all its people and ensuring their peaceful co-existence and prosperous collaboration. And as I have already conveyed to His Excellency, the Secretary General of the United Nations, it is my firm belief that the current status quo is unacceptable and its prolongation would have further negative consequences for the Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Thus, a comprehensive settlement is not only desirable, but should not be further delayed.

In this respect, I wish as a leader with a sincere vision of reuniting my country, to once more call on Turkey and our Turkish Cypriot compatriots to demonstrate the same determination and commitment and become partners in the effort for the reunification of a peaceful, secure and prosperous homeland.

The reference of my friend, the President of the Republic of Turkey, Mr Abdullah Gul, in this very chamber, to the 2004 proposal, which, through genuine democratic procedures, was not accepted by the vast majority of Greek Cypriots for a number of substantive reasons, does not absolve Turkey from its obligations and responsibilities concerning the efforts to find a just solution and does not truly reflect the realities on the ground, as borne out by the relevant UN Resolutions. Nonetheless, I welcome the decision of Turkey to respond positively to my proposal to hold meetings with the negotiator of the Greek Cypriot community.

I do hope and expect that this positive response will be followed up through practical and substantial steps and the adoption of a constructive attitude, guided by good faith which will contribute effectively towards reaching a settlement. In this respect, it is my strong belief that it is of paramount significance for a dynamic impetus to be injected, either before or even during the negotiating process, in order to restore the confidence of the people of Cyprus to the prospect of reaching a settlement. Such an impetus can only be achieved through the adoption of bold measures which are considered as 'game changers' and as creating a 'win-win situation', not only for both Communities but also for all the interested stakeholders.

With this in mind, I have submitted a package-proposal, which, amongst others, includes the return of the ghost city of Famagusta to its lawful inhabitants, under the auspices of the UN and in line with the 1984 UN Security Council Resolution 550.

The return of Famagusta, despite the evident advantage of reviving the hope of the people of Cyprus, will also provide the following benefits:

- The infrastructural restoration of a city which has been uninhabited for 39 years will undoubtedly lead to the creation of new jobs in a wide variety of professional fields, providing a major boost to the economy of the country;
- At the same time, by working together, building mutual trust and enjoying the results of joint collaboration, Greek and Turkish Cypriots will come closer to the realization of the benefits of sharing together a prosperous future, just as we have done so in the past.

Mr President,

I believe that you share my assessment in that this proposal, which is complementary to the negotiating process, is to the benefit of both communities and its acceptance would provide a much needed stimulus to the prospect of reaching a settlement. At the same time, in order to avoid entering a new frustrating negotiating process, the time for the start of the negotiations is not as important as for them to be conducted in a comprehensive manner, with clear substance, aims and targets.

To this end, I consider essential that before the start of the negotiating process to be clearly established that the basis and the solution to be reached will adhere to the relevant UN resolutions, the High Level Agreements and the evolving transformation of the Republic of Cyprus in a bi-zonal, bi-communal federal state, with a single international personality, single sovereignty and single citizenship. Moreover, the settlement must embody our capacity as an EU member state and fully enshrine its values and principles, through enhancing the role of the EU in the negotiating process. Such a role by the EU would merely supplement and complement the UN Good Offices Mission, in order to guarantee not only our effective and efficient participation in the EU through the proper implementation of the *acquis communautaire*, but also the restoration of fundamental freedoms and human rights of all Cypriots.

Last but not least, an important aspect of the Cyprus problem, of humanitarian nature is the issue of missing persons.

We salute the progress achieved so far. This issue must be resolved as soon as possible, regardless of the developments in the negotiations.

Mr President,

The positive and stabilising role that Cyprus can assume in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially in the areas of combatting terrorism, fighting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and providing humanitarian assistance, has in the past few months received extensive recognition. And keeping Cyprus peaceful and stable and with a constructive regional role is a primary objective of my Government. And we have proven that we are a reliable and interconnecting bridge between Europe, North Africa, the Near and Middle East, both in terms of perception and in terms of actions, as well as a credible and stable country that gives true credence to being a safe haven.

This has been demonstrated in practice several times during periods of massive humanitarian evacuations. We once more, if it is deemed necessary – and hopefully it will not – stand ready to contribute in a substantive manner to any international call to provide humanitarian aid and facilities to any third country national.

A recent most encouraging development in our area is taking place in the field of energy co-operation. The very promising potential of hydrocarbon exploration in the Levantine basin requires that all countries in the region work closely together, bilaterally and regionally.

Pertinent to this and a testament to our constructive role in the region is the fact that Cyprus has assumed a leading role in bringing neighbouring hydrocarbon-producing countries together, seeking opportunities not only for maritime boundary agreements but also for joint efforts in exploring these hydrocarbon resources. Energy, can, and should not be a source of conflict, but a catalyst for conflict resolution and regional integration.

Mr President,

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) framework has galvanised unparalleled development efforts and guided global and national development priorities since 2000. While three of the eight goals have been achieved prior to the final deadline, much work remains to be done ahead of 2015. With only two years left, enhanced commitment, resources and efforts are needed as well as a coordinated and integrated approach, which can contribute to accelerating progress towards achievement of all the Millennium Goals.

As a small island state, facing particular challenges, we understand well why coherence of all processes leading to a single and universal post-2015 development agenda is crucial. New and emerging asymmetric challenges like climate change and natural disasters, terrorism, inequalities, and the necessity for the prevalence of the rule of law, democracy and human rights, require renewed and collective commitment and an effective target-oriented post 2015 framework where poverty eradication and sustainable development will be at its heart.

As the UN Secretary General said in his report "Dignity for All", the world's quest for dignity, peace, prosperity, justice, sustainability and an end to poverty has reached an unprecedented moment of urgency and the world's nations must unite behind a common programme to act on those aspirations. Cyprus strongly subscribes to the joint efforts in fulfilling this task.

Mr President,

A few months ago my country received unprecedented international attention due to the economic crisis. And we are proud to say that due to the persistence, determination and resilience of the people of Cyprus we are rising to the challenge and will soon lead our country to the path of recovery and growth.

My political vision is for Cyprus to receive yet again international attention, but this time for all the right reasons. And this points to the end of the long-standing anachronistic division of my country, in order to meet the aspirations of our people, especially the younger generations, to co-exist peacefully in a European country which fully respects their fundamental human rights and freedoms. I am certain that you agree that the re-unification of my country is not only to the interest of the people of Cyprus, but also to the interests of the whole international community, since a solution to the Cyprus problem will undoubtedly have a very important spill-over effect in achieving and maintaining a much needed environment of stability, security and peace in our region.

On our part, we are determined to rise to the challenge of this historic responsibility and do our utmost with the aim of providing a more stable, prosperous and conciliatory future in our immediate region, so that our legacy is remembered by generations to come.

Thank you.



Print