

# CYPRUS

## NEWS

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• Setting the seal... European Commission President Romano Prodi given full state honours in Cyprus.

## Prodi inspects new EU member

European Commission President Romano Prodi was given the full honours of a head of state when he paid an official visit to Cyprus 25-26 October to set the seal on the prospective accession of Cyprus to the European Union (EU) by 2004 at the latest.

Accompanied by Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen and other senior officials, Signor Prodi had extensive talks with President Glafcos Clerides and other Government Ministers. He also addressed the House of Representatives and delivered a major speech to the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry on the future of Europe and the role of Cyprus in the enlargement process (see page 3).

Speaking to journalists after his talks with President Clerides, Signor Prodi said that Cyprus "is well advanced in its preparation for EU membership and will be among the first new member group". He congratulated the Cyprus Government, House of Representatives and Civil Service for "the excellent progress achieved towards accession" and noted that only a handful of chapters of the *acquis communautaire* remained to be negotiated in the months ahead.

Signor Prodi again stated the EU position established at Helsinki in 1999 that a settlement of the Cyprus problem would facilitate accession "but is not a precondition". He continued: "Accession will benefit all Cypriots in both political and economic terms, and we think that there is now a window of opportunity until the end of the negotiations, probably in the first half of next year, for a settlement". If that happened, he added, the provisions of such an agreement could be included in the arrangements for Cyprus' accession.

Prior to the visit the European Commission had rejected an invitation for Signor Prodi to meet Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash while he was in Cyprus. It was pointed out that the Commission could not accord such status to an illegal regime. An infuriated Mr Denktash responded by accusing the Commission of being "guided by its Christian beliefs" and of "leading the Greek Cypriots into adventures". These charges were described by Cyprus Government Spokesman Michalis Papapetrou on 22 October as "totally untrue" and as stemming from the international isolation of the Turkish Cypriot regime.

Mr Denktash also showed his displeasure by refusing to allow Turkish Cypriot trade union leaders to attend a meeting with Signor Prodi and Greek Cypriot union leaders, which had been scheduled to take place on 26 October at the Ledra Palace Hotel in the UN buffer zone. Accordingly, Signor Prodi went ahead with the arranged meeting with the Greek Cypriot union officials at a different location in Nicosia.

●European Parliament Rapporteur on Cyprus Jacques Poos said on 30 October that the EU hoped that the Cyprus accession process would act as a catalyst "for those who refuse to meet with the UN Secretary General to look for a solution". He was speaking after a working lunch with Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides during his latest visit to Cyprus to prepare a further parliamentary report. □

## Moves to revive Cyprus talks

As the Government awaited the arrival on 2 November of the UN Secretary General's Special Adviser on Cyprus, Alvaro de Soto, hopes rose in Nicosia that new efforts were being made to revive the stalled UN talks on Cyprus. The aim of reactivating the process had been the theme of a visit to the island on 24-27 October by the US State Department's Special Co-ordinator for Cyprus, Thomas Weston. His meetings included talks with President Clerides, who was scheduled to leave for New York via London on 6 November to address the UN General Assembly and also to discuss the current deadlock with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and the ambassadors of the five permanent members of the Security Council.

Arriving after talks in Athens and Ankara, Mr Weston said that his aim was "to reinvigorate the good offices mission of the Secretary General, as called for by the Security Council on 26 September". Speaking after his meeting with President Clerides on 25 October, Mr Weston said that despite the US campaign against terrorism "we have not lost sight of other important issues and priorities for the US, one of which remains a very high priority, and that is working towards a just, durable and comprehensive settlement to the Cyprus issue".

The US envoy said that he had had "very good and very important meetings in Ankara", although he gave no indication of any change in the intransigent Turkish line of refusing to participate in further talks on Cyprus. On 26 October Mr Weston had a meeting in the occupied area with Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash, again making no public disclosure of what transpired.

●The US commitment to UN efforts to bring about a "just and lasting settlement" was reaffirmed by President Bush in a covering letter to his latest bimonthly report to Congress on the Cyprus problem, submitted on 16 October and covering the August-September period. □

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