

CYPRUS

NEWS

Issue No. 140

Covering the period
1-30 April 2001

• Washington greeting...Cyprus Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides is welcomed to the State Department by US Secretary of State Colin Powell before the talks on Cyprus.

New US pledge for solution

Talks in Washington on 9 April between Cyprus Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides and US Secretary of State Colin Powell boosted hopes in Nicosia that the Bush Administration is committed to promoting a settlement of the Cyprus problem based on UN resolutions and that a new initiative to reactivate the stalled UN peace process will be launched following the Cyprus parliamentary elections on 27 May. The Cyprus Government also took satisfaction from further declarations by European Union (EU) leaders in April that Cyprus remains on course for EU accession, with or without a settlement, and that the process would not be obstructed by Turkish threats (see report on this page).

The Foreign Minister's talks with Mr Powell covered a range of regional and international issues but naturally focused on the Cyprus problem. Mr Kasoulides conveyed the importance which the Cyprus Government attached to accession to the EU as a potential catalyst for a Cyprus settlement and also stressed that the Turkish side should be persuaded to end its boycott of further UN proximity talks since the fifth round in November 2000.

Speaking to journalists after the talks, Mr Kasoulides said that Mr Powell had assured him of the US Government's determination to assist with the reactivation of the UN talks and of its agreement that Cyprus' EU accession was an important step. He added that he had told his US counterpart that if the Turkish side continued to insist on partition and separation rather than reunification, this would be "a permanent source of friction between Greece and Turkey".

Prior to meeting Mr Powell, Mr Kasoulides had undertaken an intensive round of meetings with Administration officials,

members of Congress and others, as well as delivering a lecture on the Cyprus situation at the Woodrow Wilson Centre.

Following the Washington talks, a US State Department spokesman on 10 April said that Mr Powell had "reiterated US support for the UN Secretary General's efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement". He added that Mr Powell had confirmed US support for "the entry of a reunited Cyprus into the EU" and the US hope that "the accession process can be used to support such a result".

On his return to Cyprus on 10 April, Mr Kasoulides said that the US shared Nicosia's view that the period up to Cyprus' milestone accession to the EU should be fully exploited in the efforts to bring about a Cyprus settlement. He also disclosed that while in Washington he had spoken by telephone to the UN Secretary General's Special Adviser on Cyprus, Alvaro de Soto, and warned him that any attempt to appease Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş in his intransigence would encourage him to believe "that his negative stance bears fruit".

Prior to the Washington talks, President Glafcos Clerides told a press conference in Nicosia on 3 April that he had requested the UN Secretary General to assume a co-ordinating role jointly with the EU with the aim of convincing the Turkish side that there was no possibility of further Cyprus talks outside of the parameters set by UN resolutions.

The Cyprus Government was therefore gratified when French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine, on a visit to Nicosia on 26-27 April, confirmed the official EU line that a settlement was not precondition for Cyprus' accession to the EU. Also welcomed was a similar statement in Stockholm on 28 April by Foreign Minister Anna Lindh of Sweden, current holder of the EU presidency. □

Turkish threats rejected with anger

The Government reacted angrily to statements made by Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem at the end of a visit to Turkish-occupied northern Cyprus on 16-18 April, lodging a formal protest with the UN against the visit and Mr Cem's unacceptably threatening assertions.

Upping the temperature of Turkey's opposition to Cyprus' prospective accession to the European Union (EU), Mr Cem had declared that EU entry would be a "Pyrrhic victory" which would bring "suffering" to both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots and that Turkey's reaction would have "no limits". He had also reiterated the Turkish side's demand for a confederal settlement and separate sovereignty for the occupied area.

Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides responded on 19 April that Mr Cem's attempted intimidation represented a last desperate effort by Turkey to obstruct Cyprus' accession to the EU. He stressed that it would not succeed, because neither the Cyprus Government nor the EU gave in to threats. Cyprus Spokesman Michalis Papapetrou was equally forthright, describing Mr Cem's words as "condemnable and unacceptable" and as contrary to the principles of international law.

In a speedy protest in New York, Cyprus' UN Permanent Representative Sotos Zackheos drew the attention of Secretary General Kofi Annan to Mr Cem's "torrent of provocative and threatening statements" and asserted that his arrival in the occupied area through an illegal entry point showed Turkey's contempt "for the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus and for the relevant resolutions and decisions of the UN, and furthermore violates international law".

He added that it was saddening that "at the dawn of the 21st century...the Turkish Republic continues to behave in a manner reminiscent of some of the worst periods of the 19th and 20th centuries, with an anachronistic approach in its relations with its neighbours based on threats and the use of force". □

Inside:

- New water era begins
- Tziakourmas freed
- Manoeuvre on Loizidou
- Suspect bank accounts
- Election count-down
- EU praise for economy
- Reassurance on offshores