

# How new House of Representatives was elected

A total of 24 of the successful candidates in the Cyprus parliamentary elections on 27 May were newly elected to the 56-member House of Representatives and a record number of six were women, compared with four in the previous House. The 454 candidates included 86 women and 448 representatives of the eight parties in contention, the other six running as independents.

Cyprus' eighth legislative elections since independence in 1960 involved an electorate of 467,182, including those aged 18 to 21 for the first time in a parliamentary contest. To cater for the bigger electorate, 1,131 polling stations were set up, 300 more than in 1996, and some 10,000 public functionaries were on electoral supervision duty. The cost of the exercise in democracy was put at about C£2 million.

The polling took place in six electoral districts, 21 members being returned from Nicosia, 12 from Limassol, 11 from Famagusta, five from Larnaca, four from Paphos and three from Kyrenia. The electoral divisions reflected the legal status of the island of Cyprus as a single state, although voters registered for the Turkish-occupied Famagusta and Kyrenia districts were Greek

Cypriots whose families had been forced to flee from northern Cyprus by the 1974 Turkish invasion and subsequent occupation. Some 500 enclaved Greek Cypriots travelled from the occupied area to cast their vote in the Government-controlled area. The 24 seats reserved under the Cyprus Constitution for the Turkish Cypriot community have not been filled since 1964.

In a turnout of 91.8 per cent, all eight parties surmounted the 1.8 per cent threshold for being awarded seats, although four won only one seat each. The results showed that the left-wing Progressive Party of the Working People (AKEL) had obtained a narrow 0.7 per cent lead over the conservative Democratic Rally (DISY), so that AKEL representation went up from 19 to 20 seats and DISY's fell from 20 to 19.

Of the three other parties represented in the previous House, the centre-right Democratic Party (DIKO), the Movement of Social Democrats (KISOS) and the centrist United Democrats (EDI) each lost one seat. The KISOS list for the Famagusta district included the leader of the small Eurodemocratic Renewal Party (KEA), Antonis Paschalides, who failed to secure election.

The three parties entering the House for the first time with one seat each were New Horizons (NEO), the Fighting Democratic Movement (ADIK) and the Greens. Former Interior Minister Dinos Michaelides, the ADIK leader, was elected in Limassol district and the Greens' principal spokesperson, George Perdiki, won a Nicosia seat. NEO leader Nicos Koutsou was not elected, but another NEO candidate was returned in Nicosia.

Also elected to the House in a non-voting role were representatives of the Maronite,

Armenian and Latin religious minority communities, the last being returned unopposed. The three minority electorates, of 2,988, 1,660 and 680 respectively, also voted in the main elections, the three groups having opted at independence in 1960 to be regarded as part of the majority Greek Cypriot community. □



• The democratic process... One of the 467,182 Cypriots entitled to vote on 27 May.

|                | % of vote |      | seats |      |
|----------------|-----------|------|-------|------|
|                | 1996      | 2001 | 1996  | 2001 |
| AKEL .. .. .   | 33.0      | 34.7 | 19    | 20   |
| DISY .. .. .   | 34.5      | 34.0 | 20    | 19   |
| DIKO .. .. .   | 16.4      | 14.8 | 10    | 9    |
| KISOS .. .. .  | 8.1       | 6.5  | 5     | 4    |
| NEO .. .. .    | 1.7       | 3.0  | 0     | 1    |
| EDI .. .. .    | 5.1       | 2.6  | 2     | 1    |
| ADIK .. .. .   | -         | 2.2  | -     | 1    |
| Greens .. .. . | 1.0       | 2.0  | 0     | 1    |

## “Powerful economy” government aim

Cyprus' economic achievements as it moves towards achieving membership of the European Union (EU) were highlighted by both President Clerides and Commerce, Industry and Tourism Minister Nicos Rolandis in speeches at the opening ceremony of the 26th Cyprus International Fair in Nicosia on 17 May.

Inaugurating the Fair, President Clerides said that despite some unfavourable conditions in recent years, such as persistent drought and the steep rise in international oil prices, the co-ordinated efforts of the private and public sectors in Cyprus had created an economy of “dynamism, flexibility and robustness”. The Government's strategic target, he continued, “is to create a very powerful economy, able to survive competition in the EU market and to further promote Cyprus as a regional centre for the provision of services”.

After mentioning favourable indicators such as downward trends in the unemployment and inflation rates and the budget deficit, the President stressed that there was no room for complacency and that “we must all be aware of the need to take measures to upgrade the quality of the infrastructure and expand the productive base of the economy”.

Mr Rolandis said that despite carrying the burden of occupation since 1974, Cyprus had achieved more economically than many other European countries, which by itself entitled the country to “a passport for entry into the

European home”. He then itemized the particular achievements of the Cyprus economy under several headings, including the following:

- an average annual rate of growth in 1998-2000 of 4.8 per cent, compared with 2.7 per cent in the EU and 3.7 per cent globally;
- the 16th highest income per capita in the world at purchasing power parity and 22nd position in the UN human development index;
- fewer people living below the poverty line than all but Denmark and the Netherlands among the present EU members;
- the strongest economy of the 13 EU applicant countries;
- increases in tourist arrivals and revenue of 29 and 40 per cent respectively in 1998-2000, compared with the international average of 14 per cent under both headings;
- rapid progress in developing the high technology sector;
- a 9 per cent increase in exports in 2000 compared with 1999;
- high professional standards in the provision of financial, medical, educational and other services.

Mr Rolandis confirmed that work would shortly begin in Cyprus on the development of solar and aeolic energy, with a view to achieving the EU target of producing 12 per cent of energy needs from renewable sources within 10 years. He also made a reference to the first “serious investigation” of possible offshore oil and gas resources, adding cryptically: “I cannot expand on the subject.” □

## Green priorities

The importance of environmental protection measures in the Government's programme for accession to the European Union (EU) was stressed by Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment Minister Costas Themistocleous on 3 May.

Addressing a Nicosia meeting of the Bureau of the signatories of the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea, the Minister said the Cyprus Government accepted responsibility “to act as a steward to the environment and to foster development that uses resources sustainably”. Therefore, within the framework of harmonization with EU standards, a series of legislative measures were being introduced covering water and air standards, management of chemicals, protection of nature, pollution control and noise prevention.

Already enacted, said Mr Themistocleous, were a law providing for environmental impact assessment studies to be made on construction and other projects and another guaranteeing public access to environmental information.

Recalling that Cyprus had ratified a number of important environmental conventions, the Minister said that he had hoped to announce ratification of five more at the meeting. The dissolution of the House of Representatives on 19 April prior to elections had prevented this timetable being met; but he was confident that the announcement would be made at the next meeting of the Bureau in Monaco in November 2001. □