

European Parliament slates Turkey

European Parliament (EP) President Nicole Fontaine (France) on 25 September sent a strongly worded letter to Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem denouncing his attempt to smear the EP's Cyprus Rapporteur, Jacques Poos (Luxembourg), following his latest report on Cyprus and the consequential adoption by the EP on 5 September of a resolution that was supportive of the Cyprus Government and highly critical of Turkey.

Approved by 505 votes to 31 on the basis of a new report from M. Poos, the EP resolution expressed "whole-hearted support" for the efforts of the UN Secretary General to find a Cyprus settlement based on international law and UN resolutions. Noting the progress of Cyprus' EU accession negotiations (see page 3), the resolution said that Cyprus "may therefore expect to accede to the EU rapidly" and reaffirmed support for the 1999 EU Helsinki Summit decision that a Cyprus settlement "is not a prerequisite for accession".

The resolution stressed that there is no possibility either of separate negotiations with the Turkish-occupied part of Cyprus or of EU accession by two Cypriot states or of later accession by northern Cyprus if and when Turkey became an EU member. It warned that "if Turkey were to carry out its threat of annexing the north of Cyprus in response to Cypriot accession to the EU and proclaim the northern part as its 82nd province in breach of international law, it would put an end to its own ambitions of EU membership".

Mr Cem's predictable reaction was to reject the resolution, issuing a press release

which accused M. Poos of being biased because he had special ties with the Greek Cypriot side. The EU Rapporteur responded angrily, immediately rejecting Mr Cem's contentions and challenging him to back up his allegations with facts.

In her intervention, Mme Fontaine told Mr Cem that, while she could understand that the Turkish Government did not share the EP's views on the Cyprus problem, she found it "unacceptable" to question the good faith of the EP Rapporteur. Noting that the Turkish Foreign Minister had "deliberately contributed to the worsening of relations between Turkey and Europe", she continued: "I denounce in the strongest possible terms the insinuations and the personal attacks against the character of M. Poos..., a European deputy who is held in high regard and whose integrity is recognized".

Mme Fontaine concluded by expressing her hope that "the inappropriate nature" of the Turkish press release was the result of a misunderstanding and would not be repeated.

●Commenting on the Turkish attack on M. Poos, the Cyprus Foreign Ministry on 5 February noted that "he is well respected throughout Europe" and suggested that "if Turkish diplomacy remains intransigent, continuously inhibits efforts for a solution to the Cyprus problem and violates UN Security Council resolutions and the European Convention of Human Rights, then it must have the courage to take responsibility for its policy and hold back from attacking objective Rapporteurs".□



•European opinion... President Nicole Fontaine (above) conveys the views of Parliament (below).



UNSC censure - the full text

The current President of the UN Security Council, Jean-David Levitte (France), on 26 September issued a statement commending the efforts by Secretary General Kofi Annan and his Special Adviser Alvaro de Soto to move the Cyprus peace process forward by inviting the Cypriot leaders to resume talks in New York in September. Issued following a detailed report by Sr de Soto on his latest talks in Cyprus (see page 1), the statement continued:

"Council members expressed disappointment at the unjustified decision by the Turkish side to decline that invitation. Progress can only be made at the negotiating table. Council members encourage the Secretary General and his Special Adviser to continue their efforts using the guidelines in Security Council resolution 1250 [adopted in June 1999], namely that there should be no preconditions; that all issues are on the table; that both sides should make a commitment in good faith to negotiate until a settlement is reached; and that there should be a full consideration of relevant UN resolutions and treaties.

"Council members gave full support to the Secretary General's efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement to the Cyprus problem. They urge all concerned to cooperate with the Secretary General and his Special Adviser and to show confidence in their judgement as to the best way to move forward."□

Division is absurd, says Papandreou

The "absurdity" of the continuing division of Cyprus was stressed by Greek Foreign Minister George Papandreou on 4 September on a two-day visit to Nicosia during which he reiterated that a Cyprus settlement was the top priority of the Greek Government and expressed his conviction that Cyprus would become a member of the European Union (EU) "with or without the Turkish Cypriots".

Mr Papandreou said that it was unacceptable that Cyprus remained divided and that the island should be "an independent country, free of military

occupation and part of the EU". Urging the Turkish Cypriots to "get beyond the idea that part of Cyprus can be under the control of a third country", he stressed that the Turkish Cypriot community would benefit greatly "if it seizes the opportunity presented by future EU membership for Cyprus".

Commenting on the Turkish Cypriot side's rejection of the UN Secretary General's invitation to new talks (see page 1), Mr Papandreou said on 5 September that such intransigence "will be judged not only by history but also by the UN and the EU".□

Oil and gas co-operation gathers pace

Co-operation between Cyprus and Egypt on oil and gas exploration and exploitation was agreed in ministerial talks in Nicosia on 25 September, as part of the Cyprus Government's strategy of promoting a collective regional response to the likely presence of substantial hydrocarbon reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean. Also involved in the co-operation will be Syria, as had been agreed by Cypriot and Syrian ministers in August.

The talks between Commerce, Industry and Tourism Minister Nicos Rolandis and Egyptian Petroleum Minister Sameh Fahmy, who was on a two-day visit to Cyprus, resulted in the creation of two bilateral technical committees. One will work on the delimitation of the continental shelf between Cyprus and Egypt to establish respective exclusive economic zones in accordance with the UN Law of the Sea Convention. The other will deal with geophysical issues such as suitability of the seabed for exploratory drilling

and the configuration of the undersea shelf.

Also confirmed in the talks was the establishment of a trilateral Cyprus-Egyptian-Syrian ministerial committee to handle the proposed construction of an underwater pipeline to bring natural gas from Syria to Cyprus. Mr Rolandis said that discussions on this project, which had been proposed by the Syrian Government, would be pursued in the trilateral framework.

Mr Rolandis explained that Cyprus' prospective accession to the European Union (EU) meant that the country would have to comply with EU directives on the use of environmentally friendly natural gas rather than oil for electricity generation and water desalination. He added that he expected Cyprus to start using natural gas by the end of 2005 or in 2006 and that the Government would also promote renewable sources of energy so that by 2010 about 12 per cent of consumption came from solar and wind energy.□