



## **FES CYPRUS NEWSLETTER**

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# **FES NEWS**

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# 1. Cyprus Problem

In September negotiations for a settlement of the Cyprus problem resumed, following the summer break during August.

The first leaders meeting took place on September 1. According to Special Adviser of the UN-Secretary on Cyprus, Espen Barth Eide, President Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci focused their discussion on property and governance related issues and reaffirmed their commitment to maintain and build upon their efforts. Eide also stated that the two negotiators, Andreas Mavroyiannis and Ozdil Nami, would continue to meet on a regular basis.

Anastasiades and Akinci met again on September 14. They discussed the state of play across the various chapters since the resumption of negotiations in May and carried out a comprehensive review of the progress carried out thus far. The two leaders agreed to intensify their work and increase the frequency of their meetings in the coming months. They both expressed their commitment to working tirelessly to reach a comprehensive settlement as soon as possible. According to Eide, the two leaders referred to the following months as 'critical' for the process. Akinci in particular expressed his will to reach a solution before May 2016, when Parliamentary elections in the south take place. Meanwhile, the Greek Cypriot side stressed that the financial aspects of reunification must be resolved before a final settlement. This view appeared to be shared by Eide who stated that particular focus will be paid on building economic support of a settlement. Anastasiades and Akinci are expected to meet again on October 12 and 30.

Meanwhile, the negotiators began discussions regarding the criteria for exchange, compensation and return of property after a settlement. According to the Cyprus News Agency, the categories could number as many as 24 and include Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot property owners, current users be they Turkish Cypriots or Turkish settlers, or third-country nationals such as EU buyers of Greek Cypriot properties or lands. The categories would also include Cyprus government and Church property, and those managed by the Turkish Cypriot religious foundation Evkaf as well as land on which schools, hospitals and roads have been built since the 1974 Turkish invasion.

On September 11, as part of a two-day visit, European Council President Donald Tusk met separately with Anastasiades and Akinci. The EC President welcomed the progress achieved in the Cyprus talks and said he believed the coming months would be very important for the process. He furthermore reiterated the EU's support towards the UN efforts for a solution, adding that Cyprus should not lose this chance for a settlement. The two leaders also met with US Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland who conveyed the support of the US for a fair and lasting settlement of the Cyprus problem.

Efforts by political parties on both sides of the divide to support the ongoing negotiation process have intensified in September. On September 1, a delegation from AKEL headed by the party's Secretary General Andros Kyprianou paid a visit to the Republican Turkish Party -United Forces (CTP-BG). Following the meeting during which both parties reaffirmed their commitment towards reaching a solution, the leader of the CTP-BG Mehmet Ali Talat and Andros Kyprianou spoke to the press. Kyprianou said that there were many issues that needed to be solved in Cyprus and added that AKEL and the CTP-BG were determined to act together towards reaching peace on the island. Stating that important progress had been achieved in the negotiation process, Talat announced that the CTP-BG and the AKEL have decided to establish a joint committee with the aim of contributing to the process. "We want to help the leaders and their teams, enable the two communities to understand the issues better and by correcting possible mistakes or misunderstandings, enable the continuation of the public's determination for peace," Talat added.

On September 14, a delegation from the Social Democratic Party (TDP) led by party leader Cemal Ozyigit paid a visit to the AKEL headquarters where they met with Andros Kyprianou and other party officials. The representatives of the two parties discussed details regarding joint events planned for the near future and decided to speed up the work being carried out by a joint committee set up by the two parties earlier.

In the meantime, the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus (CMP) has continued its efforts to locate, exhume and identify the remains of missing persons on the island. The CMP has completed the first phase of excavation at a site behind the central prison in the northern part of Nicosia and found the remains of twenty Greek Cypriot victims. The committee expects to discover the remains of twenty to thirty more bodies in the second phase of excavations on the same site.

The chairman of the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce Fikri Toros and the Greek Cypriot Chamber of Commerce and Industry Phidias Pilides spoke on a TV show on economy and business on Turkish Cypriot public broadcaster, BRT. Both said that the cooperation between the two chambers played an important role towards building peace on the island. Speaking during the program, Pilides expressed the view that a settlement in Cyprus will benefit all sectors of the economy and that investments that so far have not been made due to political problems will start, making the island "one of the most important investment centres in the region". Pilides also said that a settlement would reflect positively on the country's GNP and capita per income, achieving a 70% growth rate in just 20 years. The Chairman of the Cyprus Turkish Chamber of Commerce Fikri Toros for his part said that one could not count the endless benefits a settlement in Cyprus would bring to both sides. "We believe that we can achieve economies of scale together with the Greek Cypriot economy. You cannot expect

us to compete in an environment of political instability for anyone to come and make investments. With reunification, the island will become a centre of economic prosperity. A settlement will attract commercial investors," Toros added. It is worth adding that Pilides became the first official from a Greek Cypriot institution to attend a program on BRT.

On September 13, the play 'Hippolytus of Euripides' was performed by the Cyprus Theatre Organisation at ancient Salamis in the north. The play was performed in Greek with English and Turkish subtitles. It was organised in collaboration with the Famagusta Walled City Association (MASDER) and was under the auspices of the Bi-communal Technical Committee on Culture. It was attended by about 3.500 people, around 2.800 Greek Cypriots and 700 Turkish Cypriots.

According to the results of a survey conducted on behalf of Team Cyprus (Omada Kypros), the majority of Greek Cypriots believe that the current climate could lead to an agreement and a referendum on the Cyprus problem with a positive vote, mainly attributed to the change in Turkish Cypriot leadership. According to the survey, 30% of a sample of 1012 people would vote 'yes' compared to 26% who would vote 'no'. The majority, 40%, said it was undecided, with the chances of going either way being equal.

During a news conference in the north, Turkish Foreign Minister, Feridun Hadi Sinirlioglu, stressed that for Ankara, the security of the Turkish Cypriot people will be paramount in any Cyprus settlement and that guarantor countries would need to be involved in addressing the issue during the negotiations. Meanwhile, in an interview with Turkish Cypriot Havadis newspaper, Russian ambassador Stanislav Osadchiy stated that Russia would accept a solution approved by the people as long as there were no NATO guarantees.

The Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot operators of shipyards in Limassol and Famagusta decided to team up for a client and revenue sharing joint venture making them one of the biggest players in the Eastern Mediterranean. Under the terms of agreement signed on August 26, the Limassol-based FAMA Group, the pre-1974 operators of the Famagusta shipyard who now run the shipyard at Limassol port, will now be cooperating with Shipyard Famagusta under a common marketing and pricing policy. The two shipyards will work under the umbrella of Hong Kong based Ocean Well Ltd. The agreement allows the two shipyards to act as one of the biggest repair service providers to the offshore oil and gas exploration industry in the Eastern Mediterranean, which saw interest in its energy reserve revived following Egypt's Zohr recent gas finding.

The two leaders, Akinci and Anastasiades inaugurated an exhibition at the Center of Visual Arts and Research (CVAR) in the southern part of Nicosia where the personal collections of the former Greek Cypriot leader Glafcos Clerides were displayed. Addressing the event, Akinci

said "I am honoured to be here. We must not lose sight of our goal for a better and brighter future for our younger generations in a bi-zonal, bi-communal federal solution in Cyprus. I think this is what Clerides had in mind," adding that Clerides deserved to be remembered and commemorated. Also addressing the event, Anastasiades said that Clerides had made intensive efforts towards the reunification of the island but had unfortunately not lived long enough to see it happen.

A visit by a delegation from the United Cyprus Party (BKP) and AKEL to a cemetery in the Aloa (Atlilar) village where 89 Turkish Cypriot civilians who had been massacred in the summer of 1974 were buried, was met with the strong reaction of victims' families living in the area. The protestors collected flowers placed at the graves and threw them back at the delegation. Police officers at the scene held back the protestors. Speaking during the visit, the Secretary General of AKEL Andros Kyprianou said that the aim of the visits was to give a message of peace. When asked to comment on the incident, Akinci said "in cases such as these there are committees or commissions that aim to reconcile between communities. We too can set up similar commissions when the time comes. We need to exercise more care and sensitivity when approaching such issues. Steps taken must be done through dialogue and careful preparation. I believe that the method by which the recent visit was carried out was wrong. We need to prepare more carefully in the future," Akinci added.

Speaking to the Greek Cypriot press, former president, and current leader of the CTP-BG, Mehmet Ali Talat said that the negotiation process was going well and that he was optimistic about the process. On the financing of a settlement in Cyprus, Talat expressed the view that a solution will lead to economic development and that revenues derived from the settlement could be used for this purpose. Talat also pointed out that a chapter of contention in the negotiations was the property issue which lends itself even more complicated than territory and guarantees.

On September 10, the two leaders, Akinci and Anastasiades came together with the leaders of the five religious communities in Cyprus at the Ledra Palace Hotel in the Buffer Zone. The head of the Turkish Cypriot Department of Religious Affairs Prof. Dr. Talip Atalay, the head of the Greek Cypriot Orthodox Church Archbishop Chrisostomos II, Maronite Archbishop Youssef Soueif, Armenian Archbishop Varoujan Herkelian and the Latin Representative Reverend George Kraj attended the event. The Office of the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process is under the auspices of the Swedish Embassy in Cyprus, which has been working towards building dialogue between the religious leaders hosted the event. Speaking to reporters after the meeting, the facilitator of the Swedishled interreligious dialogue Peter Weiderud said that the religious leaders in Cyprus reiterated their support of the peace negotiations.

At the end of September, around a thousand people from the northern part of Cyprus paid a special pilgrimage to the Hala Sultan Tekke in Larnaca, which is located in the southern part of the island. The pilgrimage marked the Muslim feast of Eid Al Adha or feast of the sacrifice and was organised by the Office of the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process. For the first time, a Greek Cypriot priest, assigned by the Greek Cypriot Archbishop also visited the mosque for the occasion.

# 2. Hydrocarbons

On September 10, a delegation from the Italian energy company ENI headed by its CEO Claudio Dezcalzi arrived in Cyprus in order to meet with President Anastasiades. Dezcalci and Anastasiades discussed the future of the three blocks the Italian company jointly holds with South Korea's KOGAS within the Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). According to Descalzi, ENI's commitment to continue exploration in Cyprus is strong and good synergies could be developed in Cypriot natural gas which could find its way to Europe through the company's facilities in Egypt. The visit came in the wake of ENI's announcement in August that it discovered an estimated 30 trillion cubic feet of gas in Egypt's Zohr field. The meeting was also attended by Energy Minister Giorgos Lakkotrypis.

# 3. Greek Cypriots

## **Economic Developments**

On September 23, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) decided to disburse a €124.5 million tranche to Cyprus. Cyprus has so far received €6.6 billion from the ESM and the IMF which counts for two thirds of the total €10 billion earmarked for its bailout agreement.

Standard & Poor issued a statement on September that raised Cyprus' sovereign rating a notch to BB- citing the removal of capital controls in April and the improvement in the fiscal situation. It therefore placed its outlook to positive.

According to data released by the Cyprus Business Mail for the first six months of 2015, Bank of Cyprus (BoC) was the bank with the fastest progress in tackling non-performing loans (NPLs) compared to the Cooperative Central Bank and Hellenic Bank. In particular BoC's stock of NPL's fell to €14.8 billion or 62% of the loan portfolio as per June 30, from €15.2 billion or 63% three months before. At the end of December 2014, the NPL's of BoC stood at €15 billion and 63%. Hellenic Bank was the second best performer in containing the increase in the NPL's with the figure rising from below €2.6 billion in December or 58% of overall loans to over 2.6 billion or 60.5% in June. In March, the ratio of NPL's at the bank was 59.5%. Cooperative Banks saw their NPL's rise the most from €7.3 bn or 55.8% in December to €7.5 bn and

57.4% in March and to €7.6 bn or 58.4% in June. The high level of NPL's remains the core challenge for the Cypriot economy.

On September 30, Finance Minister Harris Georgiades submitted to parliament the government's 2016 draft budget. According to a statement on the finance ministry's website, the government is expected to see in 2016 its fiscal deficit shrink to 0.1% of gross domestic product (GDP) from 0.9% in 2015 after generating in 2014 a fiscal deficit of 0.2%. The government expects to generate a primary surplus of €433 million or 2.4% of economic output in 2016 after generating €334 million in 2015 which accounts for 1.9% of the GDP. The ministry expects economic growth to accelerate to 1.4% in 2016 from 0.5% in 2015 after contracting 2.3% in 2014.

The European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and Hellenic Bank signed on September 30 an agreement that allows the London-based lender to acquire a 5.4% stake in Cyprus' third largest bank by investing €20 million. According to EBRD director for Financial Institutions and European Union banks, Lucyna Stanczak-Wuczynska, by becoming a shareholder in Hellenic Bank the EBRD is taking a further important step to stabilise the Cypriot banking sector.

#### **Domestic Developments**

On September 24, Deputy Attorney General, Rikkos Erotokritou, was dismissed from his post

for conduct unbecoming by a decision taken unanimously by the Judicial Council, comprising the full bench of the Supreme Court. Attorney General Costas Clerides had filed a request for his deputy's dismissal last May, after Erotokritou reacted to the announcement of the findings of a criminal investigation by former judge Panayiotis Kallis, which found evidence of collusion between the deputy Attorney General and the Andreas Neocleous & Co law firm that resulted in mutually beneficial outcomes in unrelated court cases.

DIKO, the Citizens Alliance and the Greens criticized Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci, following comments he made about a link between natural gas and a possible settlement of the Cyprus Problem. Speaking to civil society organizations, Akinci claimed that if gas resources in the Eastern Mediterranean are used wisely it would be beneficial to all parties involved while an imprudent handling of natural gas would be a cause of tension in the region and might lead to conflict. DIKO leader Nicholas Papadopoulos stated that Akinci was threatening the Republic of Cyprus while the Citizens Alliance accused Anastasiades of pursuing a covert agenda referring to meetings held by the President with Turkish companies active in the energy ministry. Similarly, EDEK, the Greens, the Citizens Alliance and DIKO also reacted negatively to the President's speech given at the UN General Assembly for not going far enough to state the red lines of the Greek Cypriot side on the Cyprus issue to world leaders.

#### **Labour Relations and Trade Unions**

On September 1, the international day of trade unions' rally for peace, on the anniversary of the beginning of the World War II, PEO, the leftwing Turkish Cypriot trade unions DEV-IS, KTAMS, KTOEOS, KTOS, BES, KOOP-SEN, Turk-Sen and the Bi-Communal Peace Initiative had, as they usually do in the last years, a bi-communal event in the buffer zone in the premises of the Home for Cooperation. Turkish Cypriot Prime Minister Omer Kalyoncu was amongst those who attended. This year they had also organized a bigger follow-up event, in the form of a bi-communal concert with the legendary singers Farantouri from Greece and Livaneli from Turkey which took place on 18<sup>th</sup> September in Cetinkaya stadium in the buffer zone. Cypriot singers Umut Albayrak and Kouils Theodorou also joined the duo on the stage. A few thousand Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots attended the concert under a bi-lingual banner stating in Greek and Turkish that "the working class of Cyprus is fighting for peace and reunification".

Some trade unions expressed their opposition to the bill concerning the mobility of employees in the public and semi-public sectors. The nurses' union, PASINO complained for being excluded from the consultation process while PEO stated that what is needed is a comprehensive reform and not simply a tool with which the government can implement the privatization of public services. PEO and POAS (a coalition of small independent unions) have

expressed reservations concerning the evaluation of the posted employees while SEK and POAS have stated that everything decided should apply for hourly-paid staff as well. All unions stressed that consent of employees is essential.

A bi-communal strike lasting four days occurred in early September involving Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot employees at the British bases. The strike which was supported by PEO, SEK and Turk-Sen was a reaction to cuts in wages and benefits imposed by the British government and extended to the employees of the British bases in Cyprus. Negotiations have begun between the Authorities of the British Bases and the trade unions after the strike action and an agreement is still pending.

"Long term" unemployment in Cyprus has risen from 1.3% in 2005 to 7.7% in 2014. This is 2.6% higher than the EU average. In the same period, the "very long term" unemployment has also risen reaching 3.7%, which stands at 0.6% above the EU average. The EU Commission proposes three steps in order to deal with this: registering the unemployed in an employment service, in depth personalized evaluation after 18 months of unemployment and an agreement of obligation to offer work to all persons unemployed for over 18 months through public-private schemes.

A conflict has risen between the Hellenic Bank and the banking sector trade union ETYK over

the filling of key positions in the IT and loan restructuring departments. ETYK defends the right of its members already working in the bank to occupy these positions while the management of the Hellenic Bank wants to hire professionals from outside the bank. The Hellenic Bank has already recruited some persons and has secured a statement from the Legal Service that this does not constitute a labour grievance matter. The Hellenic Bank also plans to further extend the working time including afternoons and Saturdays and has begun a dialogue with ETYK over these issues. The managements of the Bank of Cyprus and the Cooperative Bank are following developments but have not yet entered into a dialogue with their employees' representatives.

### **Foreign Policy**

On September 17, President Anastasiades travelled to the US in order to attend the UN General Assembly scheduled for September 29. Anastasiades had the opportunity to hold a series of top level meetings with US and other officials including the American Vice President Joe Biden, Secretary of State John Kerry, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon as well as representatives of the Security Council. During his contacts and in his speech addressing the UN General Assembly, Anastasiades stressed the need not only for Turkey to proceed with the adoption of concrete measures and making a practical contribution to solving the Cyprus

problem, but also asked the international community to pressure Turkey to open the road to solving the Cyprus problem. In his speech he called specifically for an "end to the anachronistic system of guarantees". On the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, the focus of numerous top level meetings held by the Cypriot delegation were energy related and aimed at preparing the groundwork for the third trilateral meeting between Cyprus, Greece, and Egypt which is expected to take place in October.

# 4. Turkish Cypriots

#### **Economic Developments**

According to the State Planning Organization (SPO), the consumer price index went up by 2.98% in September; the highest monthly rise recorded in 2015. The annual change was 6.44%. Overall, the price of 299 goods went up while the price of 47 goods went down. The SPO attributed the rise mainly to the increase in the value of foreign currencies against the Turkish Lira.

#### **Domestic Developments**

During the ceremony marking the beginning of the judicial year, the outgoing head of the Supreme Court, Safak Oneri, highlighted the problems of the judiciary. Pointing out that the legal system and police force was struggling to cope with the rise in crime, drug abuse and growing debt-related cases as a result of the financial crisis, Oneri said that a number of urgent measures including new laws and stricter punishment were needed. Oneri also said that the number of judges was not enough to cope with the growing workload adding, "a strong judiciary can only be possible with sufficient staff and personnel". Oneri also drew attention to the importance of independence of the judiciary and pointed out that more was needed to be done in that direction.

The National Unity Party (UBP) Nicosia deputy Zorlu Tore and the former secretary general of the Farmers Union Oguz Ceyda have announced their candidacy for the party's leadership in the upcoming party congress on October 31 making themselves the sixth and seventh candidates respectively contesting in the race. Other candidates running for the party chairmanship who had announced their candidacy earlier are the Nicosia deputy and incumbent leader Huseyin Ozgurgun, Nicosia deputy Ersin Tatar, Iskele (Trikomo) deputy Nazım Cavusoglu, Kyrenia deputy Unal Ustel, and Famagusta deputy Hamza Ersan Saner.

In a written statement, the Social Democratic Party (TDP) leader Cemal Ozyigit said that there was a need to build a new order in Cyprus, which would safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of the Turkish Cypriots. Pointing out that Turkish Cypriots had suffered great injustices over the years on various issues as a result of the non-solution of the Cyprus problem and because they had been left out of international law, the TDP leader said that the only way to fix

this was through a political settlement on the island. Stating that the positive atmosphere achieved in the talks was disturbing various circles in the country, Ozyigit said that there were groups deliberately spreading speculative reports particularly on the property issue to create confusion and strike fear into the hearts of the people.

The Turkish Cypriot police disabled two separate explosive devices laid with twelve sticks of dynamite in Nicosia on September 17. The explosive devices were found by municipal workers in a side street opposite the Registration Office of the Security Forces. The police have launched a widespread investigation of the incident which is still pending.

In the meantime, the Chief of Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces, General Hulusi Akar held a series of official contacts in the northern part of Cyprus. No statements were issued before or after the meetings.

#### **Labour Relations and Trade Unions**

A delegation from the Cyprus Turkish Chamber of Industry (KTSO) paid a visit to the Minister of Interior and Labour, Aziz Gurpinar to exchange views on the amendment of the law on social security, minimum wage, unionization at the private sector as well as problems experienced at the new and old organized industrial zones including the recent flood that affected the Nicosia industrial zone. Speaking during the visit, the chairman of the chamber, Ali Cirali

expressed the chamber's readiness to contribute to efforts towards achieving a sustainable economic structure in the country as well as to the issues related with the ministry.

#### **Foreign Policy**

At the end of the month, Akinci travelled to New York for meetings on the side-lines at the 70th session of the UN General Assembly. Akinci met with the Azerbaijani Foreign Minister and the Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu.

The Turkish Cypriot Foreign Ministry released a statement regarding the refugee crisis, where it is said, among other things, that the 'TRNC' is doing its utmost with its limited resources to provide the necessary facilitation to the refugees who apply to seek refuge in our country," in close cooperation with the Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the island. It is added in the statement that the amendment of the law on refu-

gees was currently on the agenda of the government, which will enable the TRNC to play a more proactive role on matters concerning refugees.

## 5. FES Cyprus Events

# **October**

Friday 09.10.2015 until Sunday 11.10.2015 PCC / LSE / FES Conference

The Everyday Lives of Sovereignty: Contests and Conflicts in a Transnational Era

Nicosia, Chateau Status, UN Buffer Zone, Cyprus

Open to the public



FES Conference

#### Journalist Seminar

Nicosia, Chateau Status, UN Buffer Zone, Cyprus

Not open to the public

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is only recognised by the Republic of Turkey. While for Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots, Mustafa Akinci serves as President of the TRNC, the international community considers him the communal leader of the Turkish Cypriots. As the government of the Republic of Cyprus remains internationally recognised as the government of the whole of the island, the entire island is now considered to be a member of the European Union. However, the acquis communautaire is suspended in northern Cyprus pending a political settlement to the Cyprus problem (see Protocol no. 10 of the Accession Treaty).



Friday 30.10.2015 9.00 - 13.30

Jean-Monet Chair-UNIC / FES

Conference

Chances of Economic Recovery in the European

South

University of Nicosia Nicosia, Cyprus.

Program can be found at:

http://www.fescyprus.org/pages/english/events.php

Open to the public



# **November**

Thursday 05.11.2015

PCC / FES Conference

The Rise of the political Right in Cyprus

Home for cooperation

Nicosia, Cyprus

Open to the public



Saturday 07.11.2015 and Sunday 08.11.2015

Enorasis/ FES Conference

**Together We Rebuild our Common Homeland** 

Rodon Hotel, Agros Cyprus

Open to the public



Thursday 12.11.2015

PCC/ FES
Conference

**Cypriot Israeli Relations** 

Home for cooperation

Nicosia, Cyprus

Open to the public



Monday 16.11.2015

PCC/ FES
Conference

**Energy Security Conference** 

Chateau Status Nicosia, Cyprus Open to the public



Friday 27.11.2015

DZF/ FES Conference

Conference Deutsch-Zypriotisches Forum und Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Berlin Berlin, Germany

Open to the public



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