

The Views of the Turkish Cypriot Business Community on the UN plan and EU membership of Cyprus.

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- The Cyprus problem has been one of the most intractable conflicts for the past 40 years. Besides creating problems between the two communities, it affected Turkey-Greece, EU-Turkey relationships and the EU enlargement process in a negative way. The recent UN plan was the most comprehensive document that could have satisfied the needs of the two communities at optimum levels. After 40 months of negotiations, the Leaders of the two communities had met in The Hague on the 10th of March but could not agree for taking the plan to simultaneous referenda.
- **The solution of the Cyprus Problem and EU membership** perspective has united the Turkish Cypriot people for a common struggle. The 91 NGOs named as Common Vision movement in North Cyprus and This Country is Our's Platform, have organized many activities including mass demonstrations with up to 80 000 attendance. The Chamber of Commerce played leading role in this movement. This positive energy created by the Turkish Cypriot NGO movement have empowered progressive people amongst Greek Cypriots, Turkey and Greece and the international community and their willingness for a peaceful solution.
- The NGOs became very important political actors because the solution and EU membership became a priority for the Turkish Cypriots. If the problem is not solved soon with the prolonged economic crisis, there can be mass emigrations. For Turkish Cypriots solution and EU membership is a must for existence as a community.
- The Annan Plan would have satisfied basic needs of the two communities. Security needs, political equality was met and there would be one central state with two constituent states. A solution before the 16th of April would have been a win-win solution for all parties concerned with the Cyprus Problem. Annan Plan could have been a part of the primary law of the EU had a solution been found before 16th of April.
- The EU membership of Cyprus would increase the quality of life economically, socially, democratically and politically.
- Solution and EU membership will close the gap between the standards of living of the two communities. Especially the proven role of the EU on helping the underdeveloped regions will be the determining factor. Coupled with getting rid of the problems of non recognition and isolation for North-Cyprus, economy will boost. (In case of a solution EU has allocated 206 million Euros for Turkish Cypriots for 2003-6)
- Gradual introduction of the four freedoms and increased levels of economic integration will create interdependence and this will soften the behavior of the politicians.
- The two Chambers of Commerce has developed joint projects for the SME s on both sides. These joint projects are amounting to 1.5 million Euros

- The bi-communal projects that can attract international support will increase interdependence and help facilitate peaceful coexistence. (EU has allocated 300 million Euros for peace activities in Northern Ireland.)
- The great majority of the Turkish Cypriots are determined to reach to a solution based on the Annan Plan. President Denktash and the governing political parties and small number of people benefiting from the Status Quo are against the solution..
- The EU membership of the New Partnership State of Cyprus will be for the good of both communities.
- Solution and EU membership of Cyprus will facilitate EU membership process of Turkey.
- EU membership for Turkey means democratization, rule of law, good governance, respect to human rights and minority rights, transparency and accountability. This will create stability and increase of local and foreign direct investment and with harmonization of the Acquis an operating competitive free market economy with the EU funds leading to economic development. Democratization and development will mean stability for Turkey and for the region. Greek Cypriots and Greece will feel much safer if Turkey becomes EU member. All three countries will benefit from decreased military expenditure.
- Turkey cannot afford to give up EU membership perspective. The Cyprus Problem has to be solved before the end of 2004. Otherwise Turkey will not be able to start the accession negotiations with the EU.
- The solution of the problem will help better the relationship of Turkey and Greece. Solution will facilitate the solution of the Eagean Problem.

What should be done after the 16th of April:

Maximum effort has to be displayed to keep the Annan Plan alive. On the 16th of April a strong reference to the plan should be made. I sincerely hope that the Greek Cypriots will not act as victorious warriors after The Hague meeting. If they start arguing that they have become EU members and try to propose fewer rights to Turkish Cypriots in comparison to the balanced approach in the Annan Plan, it would not help to the peace process. International efforts should be used to start the negotiations based on the Annan plan and the missing parts should be fulfilled. However majority of Turkish Cypriots are convinced that they will not be able to reach to a solution as long as Mr. Denktash is the negotiator. There are high hopes that pro solution candidates will win the elections in the parliament next December. Only then can the parliament change the negotiator. No need to mention that the pro EU front in Turkey have to be strengthened meanwhile. With all going well new negotiator can start negotiations based on the Annan Plan in January 2004 and solution can come before May 2004.

Great majority of the Turkish Cypriots believe that we should not be trapped in the history but look to the future. We should learn from past mistakes but this should not discourage us from peaceful coexistence. The two communities should be ready to accept the ethnic differences as richness. Cyprus, has been well known for it's problem. Aphrodite's birthplace deserves to be well known as island of peace and prosperity.

