

Meeting between the President of the Republic of Cyprus and the German Chancellor (12 January 2011)

Caption: On 12 January 2011, Demetris Christofias, President of the Republic of Cyprus, Angela Merkel, German Chancellor, Markos Kyprianou, Cypriot Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Christoph Heusgen, Chancellor Merkel's Adviser on Foreign and Security Policy, meet at the Presidential Palace in Nicosia. Following this meeting the President of the Republic of Cyprus comments on the significance of the visit by the German delegation and on the progress made in deepening bilateral relations between the two countries, and refers to the aspiration to create bridges of unification and solidarity between the Cypriot communities and the EU as part of the solution to the Cyprus issue. The proposed solution is the potential implementation of a federation based on the German model. The Cypriot President also makes reference to Turkey's path to EU accession. The German Chancellor expresses an appreciation for the initiative taken by the Republic of Cyprus for the resolution of the Cyprus issue and expresses her support for the advancement of accession negotiations and, by extension, for the improvement of relations between Greece and Turkey.

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President Christofias meets German Chancellor - 12/01/2011

The President of the Republic Mr Demetris Christofias had a meeting yesterday at the Presidential Palace with the German Chancellor Mrs Angela Merkel within the framework of the latter's one-day working visit to Cyprus. Present at the meeting were the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Markos Kyprianou and Chancellor Merkel's Adviser on Foreign and Security Policy Mr Christoph Heusgen.

Speaking to the press after their meeting, President Christofias made the following opening statement:

"Mrs Merkel, I welcome you and your delegation on behalf of the entire Cyprus people, the Government and me personally. Your visit to Cyprus constitutes a historic milestone. This is the first time that a German Chancellor visits Cyprus. Your visit takes place a few months after the anniversary of 50 years of excellent relations between the Cyprus Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany. The significance and historic nature of the visit become evident and by the plethora of journalists who are present to cover your visit and our statements.

With Chancellor Merkel we had the opportunity to discuss, during our tete-a-tete meeting, the excellent bilateral relations between Cyprus and Germany and to put forward our future plans for their further deepening.

Germany, our partner in the EU and the eurozone, is one of Cyprus' most significant export markets. It is, at the same time, one of the first among our partners as regards the volume of exports to Cyprus. In 2010 Germany ranked third in the number of tourists coming to Cyprus.

Our discussion so far during our tete-a-tete meeting was essentially consumed exclusively on the Cyprus problem and I was moved by the Chancellor's interest in the developments in Cyprus. This proves her feelings for Cyprus and also her friendly feelings towards our country's leadership, and I would like to warmly thank her for that interest.

On a personal note I can say that I invest in our friendship with Chancellor Merkel, and I am certain that Germany's support, with Mrs Merkel heading the Government, will be a support of principles and that it will carry on unhindered until we finally manage to get rid of the Turkish occupation and policy of colonisation and until we achieve a peaceful reunification of our homeland in the framework of a bizonal, bicomunal federation as this has been agreed between the two leaders and adopted by the UN resolutions. A federation that is functional and viable, which restores the human rights and freedoms of all citizens, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot. Mrs Merkel knows better than us the meaning of a federation. She lives in a country that is a model of federation, and she is leading such country. This is more or less the type of federation we would like to create in Cyprus, with a single sovereignty, a single international personality and a single citizenship, and, of course, united and functional so that the solution would be viable.

I was given the opportunity to outline our position vis-a-vis Turkey's accession course. We do not want to hold Turkey hostage but, at the same time, it cannot go on not recognizing an EU member state and refusing persistently to enforce its obligations emanating from the Ankara Protocol which it signed.

I have assured the Chancellor that I have the good will for us to reach, the soonest possible, a solution of the Cyprus problem, provided that this solution would respect the Cyprus Republic's sovereignty and territorial integrity and respect, of course, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the entire Cyprus people, Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots and religious groups – Armenians, Maronites and Latins – who live in this multicultural country, which I envision becoming a bridge of peace and friendship between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, between the united Cyprus people and the EU and a bridge of the EU and our region. It could also be a bridge of friendship between Greece and Turkey.

I warmly thank Chancellor Merkel for her truly ardent interest and for supporting our efforts to put an end to this tragedy that has been afflicting our people for over 40 years”.

For her part, Ms Merkel, speaking through an interpreter, stated the following:

“I thank you for the warm welcome and hospitality towards both me and my delegation. You are right indeed that after 50 years of existence for the Republic of Cyprus it was about time for a German Chancellor to visit Cyprus and I am glad that I am the Chancellor to be visiting your, admittedly, very beautiful country.

As the President said we talked about various problems. Surely we would like to do whatever we can to overcome the problem of the island's division for two reasons: Firstly, we comprehend your position since Germany has also been a divided country. Secondly, Germany and Cyprus maintain particularly close and friendly relations in various fields. Let me mention the cooperation that began recently with the Max Planck Institute in the science field. We also have strong economic bonds.

We particularly appreciate your courage, the creativity you are showing and the initiative you are taking for the resolution of your problem. We see that you are making a lot of steps and we also see that the Turkish side is not duly responding to your steps, which demonstrate that you are ready for a compromise.

We will support you as much as we can in this path you are on for the resolution of the problem. We are aware that this path is not an easy one and that the solution must come from the people of Cyprus. The United Nations can only support and play a catalytic role along the way. I will visit the United Nations after lunch and their Representative to Cyprus will inform me.

Furthermore, whenever I have the chance I will confer with the officials in Turkey, both the Prime Minister and the Ministers I meet, so that we would help as well in your efforts.

We will utilise the German experience we have, as I have said and I repeat, and we would also like to help in order to render the cooperation between NATO and the CFSP possible. We definitely want to see Turkey's accession negotiations carry one, regardless of what the final decision would be and what form they will have at the end, and we are certain that this will help the improvement of relations between Greece and Turkey. It is in Germany's interest for those two countries' relations to improve and also for the Cyprus problem to be resolved.

I warmly thank you once more for the hospitality and for the good cooperation we have on a European level”.

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