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Note to the Secretary-General

Mission to Cyprus



Summary: Cyprus today has the best chance to produce a settlement since the demise of the Annan Plan in April 2004. For the first time in the history of the problem, two pro-resolution leaders are in power on the island. But the reality is that we are still a long way from that goal. Mr. Christofias, a long-time comrade of Mr. Talat, is said by his supporters and opponents to be firmly committed to resolving the "Cyprus Issue" during his term as President. He supported, then waffled on, the Annan Plan, and will need political cover to come to an agreement with similar features. Mr. Talat meanwhile would like a new agreement to resemble the Annan Plan as closely as possible, yet he knows that he will have to make painful trade-offs to broker a deal, which he needs more than the other side, and which is likely to end up being less attractive to his people than the one they voted for in 2004. While there is trust between the leaders, political actors and naysayers on both sides complicate the equation, and Mr. Christofias openly casts doubt on Mr. Talat's ability to deliver Turkey.

1. My visit to the island went well and was interpreted as the beginning of a new UN effort to back the Christofias-Talat commitment to a settlement embodied in their agreement of 21 March 2008. I saw both leaders three times, including in ample one-on-one discussions, and am convinced that they do indeed want a settlement. I think we should take their statements of good intentions at face value and do what we can to help. My meetings with the leaders of political parties on both sides of the line produced fairly predictable responses – enthusiasm from pro-settlement groups and history lessons from the opponents. Civil society and the press were positive, and many of the people at the reception we hosted were ecstatic to see the two leaders talking and mingling with the group.
2. Good atmosphere and fine words, however, will carry us only so far, and many obstacles lie ahead. The real difficulty will not be so much on substance – virtually all of the issues have been thoroughly debated and both sides know that most of the solution is laid out in the Comprehensive Settlement Plan (the "Annan Plan") of 2004 – but in the political aspects of a deal, since any new agreement will have to go to referenda on both sides. The two sides cannot refer publicly to the "Annan Plan", which was defeated three to one by the Greek Cypriots. Christofias thus will find it necessary to get as much as he can in the negotiations to show how different the outcome is from 2004. Talat on the other hand will press for only minimal concessions from that Plan to protect the gains that the Turkish Cypriots secured. At

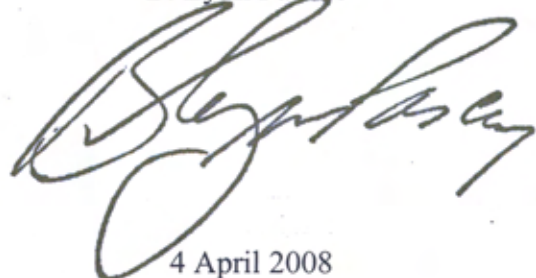
the same time, we have to recognize that the Turkish Cypriot side needs a settlement to emerge from international isolation, to enjoy the benefits of the EU (the North's economy is doing very badly at present) and to achieve an equal political role with the South. The South, prosperous and fully enjoying all the advantages of EU membership, wants to get Turkish troops out and to regain lost lands, but there is a lot less urgency.

3. The asymmetry in strength between the sides is reflected in their vision of what the UN role should be moving forward. While the Greek Cypriots want UN facilitation according to their needs, and make ample reference to the powers of the EU, Talat told me several times that any new effort will fail without strong UN intervention. He would like us to be as pushy as the market will bear in the South, both in terms of resolving deadlocks on issues of substance and in driving the process forward. "Arbitration" and "deadlines" are anathema to the Greek Cypriots, so there is a fine line to be walked.
4. Both parties seem to be engaged in pre-negotiation positioning. The Greek Cypriot side expresses deep concern that Turkey is the key factor which could impede the other side from moving on a settlement. It has also been insisting on sticking to the time-worn, high-level agreements of the late seventies as a basis for talks, while the Turkish Cypriot side insists on a broader basis for negotiations but also seeks to include from the outset terms and concepts directly lifted from the Annan Plan. It is clear that shedding the mistrust of recent years will not happen overnight. Less clear is the extent to which these positions are mere jockeying, or symptomatic of something deeper.
5. The difficulties were obvious by the second day of the meetings, chaired by the UN, on the working groups and technical committees established by the leaders in their 21 March agreement. After a good start, the meeting became quite acrimonious with respect to the basis for negotiations and the UN role. This included some very traditional maneuvering that at times sounded little different from earlier efforts to stall negotiations. This petty maneuvering over the agenda came despite full recognition by the leaders in private talks with me that the negotiations would cover the points in the Annan Plan plus some additional issues from earlier agreements and experience with the EU. Elizabeth Spehar, who will manage UNFICYP and the talks for the next month certainly has her work cut out for her. I pressed hard for them to get away from the old ways, but I have no illusions that the talks will be anything but difficult.
6. On a positive note, the Ledra Street crossing was opened by the two sides on 3 April, to an ebullient crowd from both parts of the island. A short ceremony was held, attended by the Acting SRSR Spehar, the leaders' advisers, the two Mayors of Nicosia (north and south), the EU and other local and foreign dignitaries. Various last minute difficulties of both a political and security nature plagued the final hours prior to the opening, and indeed, the crossing was closed over two hours by Greek Cypriot complaints until our team got it back open. This crossing is symbolically important as it is in the heart of the Nicosia old town and has been

closed since 1963. Its opening is emblematic of what could ultimately be achieved, in the form of a long-awaited reunification of the island.

7. The clock has now begun to run on the ninety-day period of preparations and assessment by the working groups and technical committees. A best-case outcome would be for the two sides to comb through the Annan Plan and other possible language to see what is now agreed and what must be negotiated by the leaders. Elizabeth and her team are trying to make this happen. We will try to get Taye Zerihoun there a few days before the end of April to enable him to continue to manage this effort. I may have to go back a time or two in this ninety-day period to press for more progress. We will need to encourage the Greeks and Turks as well as the EU to help. I will go to Athens and Ankara next week before meeting you in Moscow and travel at a later date to Brussels. The P-5 ambassadors on the island are quite helpful, work together well, and will seek the support of their governments for the process.
8. Assuming there is reasonable progress, you will want to consider a high-level Personal Envoy to manage the negotiating process involving the two leaders and to continue to press the sides to a final settlement. Your envoy need not be based on the island full time, but should expect to work there during extended periods over the space of a year or so. At some point a visit by you to the island will also be important to provide momentum.
9. I plan to brief the Security Council after we return from Moscow. The UK in particular is pushing for this to happen, and would like to use my briefing as a hook for a positive Council statement to encourage further progress.

B. Lynn Pascoe

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Lynn Pascoe', written in a cursive style.

4 April 2008

Note to Mr. Nambiar

MISSION TO CYPRUS

Please find attached a note on my mission to Cyprus for the Secretary-General's attention.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Lynn Pascoe', is written over the typed name and date.

B. Lynn Pascoe
4 April 2007