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SOLIDARITY IN PRACTICE: CYPRUS-UKRAINE RELATIONS THROUGH DIALOGUE AND DEEDS

— *Your Excellency, we deeply appreciate your presence in Kyiv and your assumption of the leadership of the Embassy during these challenging times. Could you please outline the current state of Cypriot-Ukrainian ties?*

— The bilateral relations between Cyprus and Ukraine are excellent. Even though the war has created certain unavoidable difficulties for everyone, both Cyprus and Ukraine find ways to overcome them and continue to enjoy great relations via constant dialogue and exchange of useful ideas. Cyprus demonstrates its solidarity with the people of Ukraine on every occasion by proceeding to actual deeds both on the national level and within the mechanisms of the European Union. At this point, it will suffice to mention that Cyprus is proportionately in the top 3 EU countries contributing to humanitarian aid for Ukraine. Our position towards the Russian aggression in Ukraine remains unequivocal: order must be restored.

— *We are grateful for the assistance and favourable conditions provided to Ukrainians seeking temporary protection in Cyprus. How have sentiments and perceptions towards Ukraine changed among Cypriots?*

— Perceptions have not changed; however, sentiments of sympathy and empathy have tremendously increased because Cyprus people experienced the same situation in 1974: invasion, occupation, violation of human rights, continuous suffering, etc. Cyprus shows full solidarity with Ukraine in representing summits by its President, in ministerial meetings by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and in Kyiv by its Ambassador. We always stress that as a member state of the EU and as a country still divided because of invasion and continuous occupation by Türkiye, it's only natural for Cyprus to maintain its firm position in support of Ukraine and be vocal in respect to international law.

— *In November 2023, it became known that Cyprus joined the G7 Vilnius Declaration as the 30th country to provide security guarantees to Ukraine. What are the current initiatives to enhance European security?*

— On the aspects of the long-term needs of Ukraine and the security situation, there is a clear understanding in the EU that a solid and coherent package of security commitments is needed in order to ensure the ability of Ukraine to

defend itself. There are various proposals which could be summarised into a sustained provision of military equipment through the European Peace Facility (EPF) with a new dedicated envelope under the EPF for the period 2024–27, which was passed on 18 March, strengthening the role of the EU Advisory Mission to Ukraine, enhancing Ukraine’s air defence through co-funding by member states, support in demining, reforms process facilitation, financial aid for reconstruction, integration to the EU single market, use of Russian frozen assets and imposition of restrictive measures. Evidently, many of these proposals entail long-term financial commitments by the member states, especially those related to the provision of military support, reforms, and reconstruction. On the proposed military aid funding until 2027, Cyprus is estimated to contribute approximately 7.5 million euros per annum.

— *Mr Ambassador, could you please elaborate on Cyprus’s contribution to the implementation of President Zelenskyy’s Peace Formula?*

— Cyprus, as a member state of the EU, always strives to pass a common message, having as a starting point the situation in Ukraine. The main goal is to ensure as wide as possible international support for the key principles and objectives of the Peace Formula of President Zelenskyy. To reaffirm the message that Cyprus is in process to enhance its engagement in support of Ukraine even further, Cyprus is actively participating in the implementation of the Peace Formula of President Zelenskyy focusing on points 5 and 8. Point 5 is related to the implementation of the UN Charter and the restoration of Ukraine’s territorial integrity and world order. Point 8 of President Zelenskyy’s Peace Formula is dedicated to protecting the environment and countering the ecocide and includes many aspects such as the legal responsibility of Russia for ecocide, assessment of environmental damage, restoration of treatment facilities, countering the consequences of the destruction of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant dam. Cyprus can contribute actively only to the aspect of strengthening the international assistance for the demining of the liberated territories of Ukraine, which is a field that our country has expertise to offer, and the humanitarian angle of demining cannot be disputed in political terms. Moreover, around 100 Ukrainian experts have already been trained in Cyprus following the agreement on technical assistance for demining Ukrainian territories announced in April 2023 by the then Defence Ministers of Cyprus and Ukraine Michalis Giorgallas and Oleksii Reznikov.

— *Your Excellency, the historical parallels between Cyprus and Ukraine, marked by resilience, struggle, and cultural richness, are noteworthy. How does the Embassy foster cultural exchange between our two nations?*

— The Embassy does get involved in almost all the cultural events in Kyiv and contributes in one way or another. By means of example, the Embassy, in cooperation with the GDIP, organised an exhibition. It opened on 20 March 2024,

and its title is 'Reflections of Cyprus and Ukraine'. It is an attempt to give hope to the people of Ukraine in this difficult time we all live in. A note that is different from the ones of war and which might help to give some kind of normalcy and, consequently, hope to the minds of the Ukrainian people. Psychology plays an important role, just as other aspects do during a war.

— *In June 2023, President of Cyprus Nikos Christodoulides affirmed a 'zero tolerance' policy towards any Cypriot citizen or company helping to evade international sanctions imposed on Russia following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Mr Ambassador, could you please tell us about the steps taken in this regard?*

— The President did say that and fully observed it, too. Both the national watchdog department as well as the European one monitor these activities closely. All steps related to the financial aspect are linked to accountability and the use of Russian frozen assets, and Cyprus has underlined the need for legally sound solutions in this regard. Discussions are ongoing with G7 partners, and there is an understanding that the issue is politically and legally sensitive. Cyprus advocates a coordinated approach for our EU joint contribution to the resilience and recovery of Ukraine. We are also in favour of a more robust anti-circumvention mechanism, thus we support further means to address this issue.

— *What steps is Cyprus taking to enhance bilateral trade and economic cooperation with Ukraine? How do you envisage Cyprus's role in the post-war reconstruction efforts?*

— We are taking quite a few steps and measures to ensure that once the war is ended, all economic and commercial activities will resume their normal course as in the past. Given the politically and legally sensitive nature of these issues, we will give some leeway to prospective peace to tackle them, hopefully, in the near future.

Cyprus's companies are ready to come and work for the reconstruction of Ukraine once the war comes to its end. They do have both the expertise and the bulk to make a major contribution to the post-war recovery. With the help of the Embassy, these companies monitor developments closely and prepare for participating in the prospective reconstruction of Ukraine.