

### **On the Occasion of the Annan Visit**

Several politicians and analysts had repeatedly declared before February 16 that the final outcome of the Presidential election on that date would constitute in reality a referendum on the Annan plan. And so it has. Papadopoulos achieved a clear victory against Clerides (51.51% vs 38.80%) from the first round of these elections. Of course, as in all elections, a set of complex factors determine the final outcome. And one could also say that Clerides lost because there was a four-party alliance against him while his own party was not fully in support of him, not to mention the candidacy of his closest advisor Attorney General Alecos Markides. But still the outcome of the election was to a great extent a referendum on the Annan plan. Had this UN plan been considered satisfactory and acceptable to the majority of the electorate, Clerides would either have no opponents to face in the Presidential election or, if he had, he would still have won.

Consequently, it should be realized that the outcome of the Presidential election suggests, among other things, that Cypriots have higher expectations in relation to what a solution of the Cyprus problem should be. In this regard, for the Secretary General of the UN and his special envoy as well as for the other interested parties such as the UK and the US, to pretend that nothing has changed in Cyprus since February 16, 2003 is politically myopic.

At the end of the day, a solution of the Cyprus problem should have the proactive support of the majority of both communities in the island. And this not only for the purpose of securing "yes" votes at the proposed referendums. For any solution to

be sustainable, much effort, good will and tolerance on both sides will be required. And above all the active support of the people. So the Annan plan(s) or any plan should meet fundamental criteria of any modern state which aspires to play a constructive role in the EU and in the new international environment. The UN as well as other interested parties should understand that the Republic of Cyprus has matured and does not require guarantor powers.

In relation to the settlers Greek Cypriots feel that is a political issue; among other things, it poses a security threat as suggested by the Greek Cypriot proposals of 1989 which were put forward by the then President Vassiliou. In addition, it is one thing to protect the rights of the Turkish Cypriots and it is another to promote a plan with huge democratic deficits. Furthermore, in order to satisfy the objectives of one party it is not necessary to step upon the rights of the other side. Likewise, Cypriots would not like the Supreme Court and the three foreign judges assuming a dominant role in the politics of the country on the day after such a solution. Moreover, the plan does not seem to incorporate the logic of sound economics. Among other things, the provisions of the Annan plan would not lead to a single economy. In this regard it is important to note that economic convergence between the two communities cannot take place in the absence of a unified economy. Indeed, EU financial aid and Greek Cypriot subsidies would not be effective without a truly single market. In addition, the expansion of public spending due to the three-state structure would most likely undermine the dynamism of the Cypriot economy. And the complex decision making mechanisms would more often than not lead to policy paralysis.

It should also be understood that the criticism of the Annan plan should not be equated to the lack of a desire for a peaceful resolution of the problem. On the contrary, the majority of Cypriots on both sides of the Green Line would really like a resolution of the problem; but they are more concerned about the day after. That means that the deadlines set by Mr. Annan are not a priority for Cypriots; what is a priority is a solution for which there would be adequate reason for jubilant celebrations.

In fact a better outcome would be more likely if more time is allowed for negotiations. After all the newly-elected President, Mr. Papadopoulos, cannot sign any solution without him contributing to the final outcome especially since he promised to do so as a candidate, as well as on the evening of his electoral victory. It is also important to note that a solution to the Cyprus problem should address current and future needs and not merely legitimize the outcome of the 1974 events.

The accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the EU would provide additional momentum for a resolution of the Cyprus problem. As Ankara would be working toward securing a date for the beginning of accession negotiations with the EU, the resolution of the Cyprus problem would obviously become a precondition or at least a major factor in the process which cannot be ignored. The solution should depend on both the historical compromise of a federal solution as agreed by the two communities in 1977 and 1979 as well as on the European Acquis Communautaire. Such an outcome has the potential to generate shared prosperity and also promote stability and security in the island and beyond.