

We welcome the progress made towards finding a lasting and viable solution that reunifies Cyprus and its people. However a number of crucial issues remain unresolved. President Anastasiades and Mr Akinci met in Geneva from 9 to 11 January to discuss the issues of Property, Territory, Governance, Economy, EU and Financing/Implementation. On January 12 a multi-lateral conference on Cyprus was convened with the participation of Mr Akinci, as Leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, Mr Anastasiades in his dual capacity as Leader of the Greek Cypriot community and President of the Republic of Cyprus, UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, UK Minister for Europe and the Americas Sir Alan Duncan, Greek Foreign Minister Nicos Kotzias, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, EU Commission President Juncker and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Federica Mogherini to discuss the issues of security and guarantees.

The meeting in Geneva hailed a few “firsts” in the negotiations to reunite Cyprus:

- For the first time since 1974 the Turkish Cypriot community proposed a map that outlined the return of a proportion of the occupied territory under Greek Cypriot Administration. Unfortunately this proposal does not seem to go far enough, although it will form the basis for further negotiations
- For the first time a multilateral conference on Cyprus’ future security arrangements, was held during which Turkey engaged in dialogue, with, amongst others, the Republic of Cyprus to discuss the removal of the anachronistic system of guarantees and withdrawal of the occupying troops

At the multilateral conference it was agreed that the participants would engage in negotiations at technical/expert level on the issue of Security and Guarantees to commence on 18 January.

The Turkish position on security and Guarantees was outlined by President Erdogan on Friday 13 January who said that a full withdrawal of Turkey’s 40,000 troops from Cyprus was “out of the question”. He went on to say “We have told Cyprus and Greece clearly that they should not expect a solution without Turkey as guarantor. We are going to be there forever.” Turkey was a guarantor power in 1974 and used this as a pretext to illegally invade and occupy over one-third of the island. Therefore, such comments are unacceptable to Greek Cypriots who would feel insecure with Turkey’s continued presence on the island. These comments are also unhelpful in the context of the current negotiations. The Greek Cypriot position on this issues is clear: A re-united Cyprus that is a member of the United Nations and the European Union provides the best form of security and guarantee of its sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, against any external threats. In addition a modern EU country cannot have a guarantor system or foreign troops on its island.

In addition to the issue of Security and Guarantees, there are still other critical issues to be resolved:

• **Refugee Property and Territory:** President Anastasiades is, rightly, seeking to ensure that the maximum number of Greek Cypriot refugees (90,000 out of the 170,000) are able to return to their homes by tabling a proposal that 28.2% of the territory will be under Turkish Cypriot administration. Sadly, the Turkish Cypriot position continues to seek to limit the return of refugees to ~65,000 by proposing to keep 29.2% of the territory under Turkish Cypriot administration. The territorial discussions seem to have focused primarily on the occupied town of Morphou – a largely Greek Cypriot town before the Turkish invasion. President Anastasiades has consistently sought the return of Morphou to Greek Cypriot control, to maximise the number of refugees able to return to their homes and to minimise the compensation required. However, Mr Erdogan as recently as 13 January was quoted as saying Morphou should be under Turkish Cypriot administration.

• **Governance:** Turkish Cypriot Leader Mustafa Akinci and President Erdogan have been insistent on a rotating Presidency system. President Anastasiades has already demonstrated his willingness to ensure Turkish Cypriots are fairly represented in the state institutions, proposing that 30% of all Civil servants and 36% of the Council of Ministers are Turkish Cypriot (Turkish Cypriots constitute 18% of the island's population). However the idea of a rotating Presidency is a step too far. Indeed, the lessons from Northern Ireland over the last few weeks, highlight the fragility of cumbersome power-sharing relationships in the Executive branch.

The President of the National Federation of Cypriots, Christos Karaolis said “As the Cypriot diaspora in the UK we continue to fully support President Anastasiades, who has demonstrated incredible political will and courage in his efforts to reunite Cyprus and its people.” He went on to say “It is becoming clear to all that the key to reuniting Cyprus lies in Turkey. Therefore, the time has come for Turkey to demonstrate with actions and not just words that it is serious about solving the Cyprus issue. Guarantees and Turkish troops have no place in a 21st century Cyprus.”