

**KEYNOTE SPEECH BY DR. ERATO KOZAKOY-MARCOULLIS  
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AT THE SYMPOSIUM TO MARK THE PASSAGE OF 60 YEARS SINCE THE  
REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS ESTABLISHED STATE RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA  
ORGANIZED BY UCLAN CYPRUS  
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On 24 August 1960, during the discussion in the UNSC of the Admission of the Republic of Cyprus to Membership in the United Nations, the then Deputy Permanent Representative of the USSR to the United Nations, Platon Morozov stated the following:

**“For the Cypriots, the formation of the Republic of Cyprus is an important stage in the struggle for independence. It is well known that the Soviet Union has always sided with the people of Cyprus in their struggle against colonial domination and has consistently upheld in the United Nations the Cypriots' right to self-determination. Hence it was only natural that on the day when the flag of the new Republic was raised over Cyprus, the Soviet Union should have solemnly proclaimed its recognition of the Republic of Cyprus as a sovereign state and expressed its readiness to establish diplomatic relations with it.”**

In the same speech, the USSR representative noted emphatically that his country's vote in favour of the resolution for the admission of the Republic of Cyprus, **“should not be interpreted as signifying any recognition whatsoever by the Soviet Union of the provisions relating to the retention of foreign military bases in the island of Cyprus”**, which the Soviet Union considered as contrary to the principle of sovereignty.

This year marks 60 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries, which reflect the historic and outstanding relations of friendship and cooperation of the Republic of Cyprus with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and since 1992 with its successor state, the Russian Federation. This is evidenced by the notable exchange of high-level visits over the years, the signing of more than sixty bilateral agreements on a wide range of sectors, the existing political dialogue between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, the close economic relations, especially in the field of investment and tourism and the extremely friendly relations between the two peoples, which are based on historic bonds of cultural and religious affinity.

Nevertheless, the most important aspect of our relations has been Russia's long-standing support for the Cyprus problem, especially in its capacity as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, which has served over the troubled years since 1963, as a true political shield, especially against Turkish violations of the sovereign rights of the Republic of Cyprus.

As a result of my 30 yearlong diplomatic experience, eight of which at the United Nations, and of my two terms as Foreign Minister of the Republic of Cyprus, I had been privileged to follow very closely the position of the former Soviet Union and since 1992 of the Russian Federation, with regard to the Cyprus problem. An important tool to evaluate such position has been the voting record on the relevant resolutions adopted and the respective statements during the debates, held both in the General Assembly and in the Security Council of the United Nations.

With regard to the adoption of UN resolutions on the Cyprus problem, a very consistent pattern of staunch support can be observed, throughout the past 60 years, reflecting the Soviet Union's and Russia's full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus and its consistent support for a Cyprus settlement based on the UN resolutions, which provide the appropriate framework and parameters endorsed by both leaders and by the international community.

The only negative vote (in fact exercise of a veto right) of Russia in the Security Council, was cast on 21 April 2004, when a draft resolution was presented by the United Kingdom and the United States, that would have terminated the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus and replaced it with the UN Settlement Implementation Mission in Cyprus (UNSIMIC), provided in the Annan Plan. Such a move was considered by the Russian Federation as an external interference or pressure exerted on the sides, that could influence the outcome of the two simultaneous referenda, which were scheduled to take place three days later on the Annan Plan.

There is no doubt that this foreign policy position of Russia is not merely based on the classical promotion of her own national interests, which is only natural, but on a more solid approach of defending certain principles embodied in the UN Charter in the case of a small country, victim of foreign aggression and occupation. It was

strongly felt that “abandoning” Cyprus to the mercy of the expansionist ambitions of Turkey, (which is a member of the NATO pact), would have set a very bad precedent internationally, which would not have served the interests of any international law abiding country, the UN included.

With regard to the position of the Soviet Union/Russian Federation in the UN debates on the Cyprus problem, again we observe a consistent pattern of staunch support during all the difficult and at times tragic moments for the Republic of Cyprus, starting with the intercommunal conflicts and the threats of invasion by Turkey in 1963-64, the establishment of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus in 1964, the coup d’ etat against the President of the Republic of Cyprus by the Greek junta and the two phases of the Turkish invasion in July and August of 1974, the attempted secession of the occupied part of Cyprus and the illegal proclamation of a separate state in 1983, as well as throughout all the different initiatives and good offices missions exerted by all seven UN Secretaries General for the solution of the Cyprus problem.

As an example of this support, I will quote extracts from three statements of the Soviet Union’s representatives in 1964, 1974 and 1983:

On 19 February 1964, the Permanent Representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Ambassador Nikolai Trofimovich Fedorenko, in a very lengthy intervention in the debate of the Security Council, following Turkish threats to invade the island, concluded as follows:

**“The Security Council must take urgent measures to protect the Republic of Cyprus from aggression and to prohibit and stop any foreign intervention in the Internal affairs of this small State Member of the United Nations. It is the duty of the Security Council to safeguard the national independence and the territorial inviolability and integrity of Cyprus, and to ensure respect for the sovereignty, - freedom and independence of the Republic of Cyprus in accordance with the purposes and basic provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.”**

In his statement in the debate of the Security Council on 15 August 1974, following the second invasion of Turkey, the Permanent Representative of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, Ambassador Yakov Malik, stressed the following:

**“The Soviet Union is in favour of protecting the independence of the Cypriot State, which wishes to pursue a policy of non-alignment; it is in favour of maintaining the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus, and opposes the partition or annexation of the island on any pretext. The Soviet Government insists on the immediate cessation of foreign military intervention in Cyprus, the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the island and the restoration of the constitutional Government of the Republic of Cyprus and of all the institutions of that Government.”**

Finally, during the debate of the Security Council held on 18 November 1983 on the attempted secession of the occupied part of Cyprus, the Soviet Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Oleg Troyanovsky, reaffirmed most emphatically the Soviet Union’s solid position:

**“The Soviet Union cannot but share the profound concern of the international community at the proclamation by the leadership of the Turkish community in Cyprus of a so-called independent State in the northern part of the island. The events now being considered by the Security Council have the particular feature of having occurred in the part of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus which is under foreign military occupation. It is clear that this separatist act can only lead to a further exacerbation of the situation in Cyprus and subvert the foundations of and prospects for a just political settlement of the question of Cyprus; there is no doubt that that act should be condemned. The Soviet Union condemns all actions which undermine the territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus and create a threat to peace and international security. The Soviet Union believes that, in the interest of peace and tranquility in the area, the leadership of the Turkish Cypriot community should rescind its decision.”**

It is obvious from the above statements, which constitute but a mere fraction of the massive diachronic support of this important Permanent Member of the Security Council towards the Republic of Cyprus, that without Russia’s principled stand and political shield, particularly in the United Nations, developments would have probably evolved very differently and would have been detrimental for the Republic of Cyprus.

It is for this reason that I have always maintained the view that Russia, as a Permanent Member of the Security Council, should always remain an important

ally and a valuable partner and thus should be kept fully informed, at all times, by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, regarding our positions and intentions on specific aspects of the Cyprus problem. Close cooperation should, also, be established, between our Permanent Missions in New York, Brussels and Strasbourg.

Apart from the Cyprus problem, there is broad scope for much closer cooperation between the two countries in many other fields. Tourism and Investments have been booming over the last 15 years, to the benefit of both countries, with nearly 800 thousand Russian tourist arrivals having been recorded in Cyprus in 2019 and Cyprus being included among the top three countries investing in Russia's economy. The funds of such investments were mostly of Russian origin and they were reinvested in Russia using the extremely favorable terms of Cyprus' legislation. Additionally, Russian businesses are also investing in Cyprus taking advantage of Cyprus' EU membership, the high-quality economic and legal infrastructure, connectivity, stability and safety and the friendly attitudes towards Russians.

Another area that cooperation could be greatly beneficial for Cyprus is academic cooperation and particularly research. Relevant agreements could be signed and both governments should encourage cooperation between academic and research institutions. The conclusion of the Memorandum of Understanding between the UCLan Cyprus and the Moscow State Institute of International Relations of the University in Moscow, is a glaring example of such cooperation. The Russian Federation could also be very instrumental in sharing with the Republic of Cyprus her valuable experiences on energy issues, not necessarily on the hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation. In any case, we should be very careful not to be seen as being antagonistic to the Russian Federation or promoting ours and the EU's interests to the detriment of the interests of Russia, but as working with our neighboring countries and others to create parallel energy corridors to diversify and thus strengthen energy supply and energy security.

Since the Republic of Cyprus became a member of the European Union, we have had limitations as far as differentiating our foreign policy position on major issues, including some of direct concern to the Russian Federation. Nevertheless, because of our close political, economic, financial and trade relations with Russia, we have tried along with other like-minded partners in the EU, to influence the adoption of

more moderate positions towards Russia, in order for the sanctions not to adversely affect the economies of member states, including our own.

In conclusion allow me to say a few words regarding the status of relations and close rapprochement and cooperation between Turkey and the Russian Federation during the last 4 years, covering such highly geostrategic areas like the construction of the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant, the launching last January of the natural gas pipeline TurkStream and the purchase of the S-400 missile system, to mention just a few.

On the other hand, in recent years the United States of America and the Republic of Cyprus have been nurturing closer and more strategic cooperation between them, which culminated last December in the adoption of the Menendez-Rubio Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act of 2019, which included a last moment amendment based on which the Government of the Republic of Cyprus should take the steps necessary to deny Russian military vessels access to its ports for refueling and servicing. The President of the Republic of Cyprus publicly emphasized that such a demand is unacceptable to the Republic, as it would curtail Cypriot sovereignty. I would add, though, that moreover it would violate an Agreement signed in February 2015 between President Anastasiades and President Putin to give Russian military ships access to Cypriot ports, mostly to counter international anti-terrorist and piracy efforts. Nevertheless, US officials who visited the island recently, including Secretary of State Pompeo himself, reiterated the US's concerns over the regular entries of Russian vessels in Cypriot ports and asked the Government to heed to these concerns.

These developments should be seen with extreme caution and every effort should be made on both sides, the Republic of Cyprus and the Russian Federation, not to upset and disturb the longstanding friendly and very close cooperation and mutual support between the two countries.

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was categorical when asked about Russian-Turkish relations in an interview published in the daily Phileleftheros on 7 September 2020, a day before his working visit to Cyprus commenced:

**“As for our relations with Turkey, I would like to assure our Cypriot friends, once again, that the current development of Russian-Turkish cooperation and the need for interaction with Ankara on regional matters, are not having and will not have any effect on our dialogue with Nicosia.”**

Foreign Minister Lavrov has been and will continue to be an invaluable friend of Cyprus and we should work very closely with him and the Government of the Russian Federation to maintain and further strengthen our relations, having always in mind that this friendship has endured for over 60 years and has flourished, not because of pragmatic interests but, moreover, because of deep-rooted values and principles upon which both countries have based their relations.