

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

APRIL 9, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

Pursuant to Public Law 94-104, I am submitting a further report on the progress of Cyprus negotiations and the efforts this Administration is making to help find a lasting solution to the problems of the island. In two previous reports, I detailed the Administration's major effort to encourage the resumption of negotiations between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. My most recent report, submitted in February, indicated that the two sides had agreed to resume the intercommunal negotiating process later that month. That round of talks did, in fact, take place.

The Greek Cypriot negotiator and his Turkish Cypriot counterpart met in Vienna February 17-21, 1976, under the aegis of UN Secretary General Waldheim. The meetings concluded with agreement by the two sides to exchange proposals on the key substantive Cyprus issues -- including control of territory -- within six weeks. Moreover, the parties agreed to meet again in Vienna following the exchange of written proposals for the purpose, according to a joint announcement made on February 21, of establishing a common basis before the proposals are submitted to mixed committees which will function in Cyprus during recesses in the Vienna-level talks.

The commitment of both sides to introduce negotiating proposals on the key territorial and constitutional issues must be viewed as a significant advance. Until the recent Vienna meeting, the two sides had never been able to agree on a procedural formula which would allow the exchange of their respective positions on these key issues of the Cyprus problem. That obstacle has now been overcome.

At the recent Vienna talks, the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot negotiators also agreed to resume talks in Nicosia on humanitarian considerations. To date, six meetings have been held which have dealt with the problem of missing persons, among other issues, and the situation of the Greek Cypriots living in the Turkish sector. There is evidence that these talks are producing concrete results. For example, according to a United Nations communique issued at the conclusion of the March 27 Nicosia meeting, nine schools will be reopened in the Turkish sector on the island to provide for the educational needs of the Greek Cypriot population that has chosen to remain in that area.

The United States continues to remain alert to any opportunity to assist the negotiating process more directly. During the recent visit to Washington of Turkish Foreign Minister Caglayangil, I emphasized the need for both sides to negotiate in good faith so that progress on the Cyprus problem can be realized as expeditiously as possible. Secretary of State Kissinger also addressed the Cyprus question in his discussions with the Foreign Minister. It was clear from our conversations that Foreign Minister Caglayangil believes these negotiations should be sustained so that the entire spectrum of issues can be considered.

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In sum, we are encouraged that the negotiating process has been resumed and that a procedure has been developed whereby the critical issues can finally be subjected to serious negotiations. An important threshold has been crossed. Equally encouraging is the impetus that has been created to work out the humanitarian problems. Now we must all work to maintain and increase momentum. We are ourselves again reviewing the situation to see what more can be done to complement the efforts of UN Secretary General Waldheim and the parties, now that the stage has been reached where proposals are being exchanged. We will give serious consideration to any initiative or action -- consonant with the wishes of those involved -- which would provide greater impetus to the process that is now underway. In the weeks ahead, we will be in touch with the parties to explore such possibilities.

For the moment, we urge that the two sides engage in realistic and statesmanlike discussions on the major issues such as territory. For our part, we shall continue to devote our energies and resources to finding a just solution to the problems of Cyprus.

GERALD R. FORD

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