

Message from Kofi Annan on Cyprus (21 April 2004)

Caption: On 21 April 2004, in the run-up to the referendum due to be held in Cyprus on the unification of the island, Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General, reassures the Cypriot people that the world is ready to help them to achieve unification in security.

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Secretary-General Kofi Annan's message to the people of Cyprus, 21 April 2004

This Saturday, each one of you has a difficult decision to make – one that will determine the destiny of your country.

As your leaders agreed, they will put before you a plan to reunite Cyprus. A plan that would end decades of division. A plan that would allow a united island to enter the European Union on 1 May.

I know you call it “the Annan Plan”. Indeed, parts of the plan were put together by the United Nations.

But all of its key concepts emerged out of four years of negotiation among your leaders. And most of its 9,000 pages were drafted by hundreds of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Their extraordinary efforts produced one of the most comprehensive peace plans in the history of the United Nations.

On Saturday, you will be asked whether you wish to make this plan the basis for your common future. That decision is yours – and yours alone.

I welcome the support the plan has received from political leaders on both sides, and in Greece and Turkey.

I acknowledge truly that this plan does not meet the full demands of either side. In fact, it is a compromise, as is inevitable in any negotiation. It is also the only foreseeable route to the reunification of Cyprus.

There is no other plan out there. There is no magic way of accommodating the maximum demands of one side while at the same time accommodating the maximum demands of the other. This is it.

The plan is a long and complex legal document. Why?

Because this is not a paper agreement. It is a serious plan, designed to provide certainty and security, with guarantees that it will be implemented. Its whole purpose is to ensure that the benefits it promises will be realized.

The plan envisages one independent and sovereign State, the United Cyprus Republic. That State is based on the parameters agreed between the parties since the 1970s – a bi-communal, bi-zonal federal structure, based on the political equality of the two communities.

The plan prohibits partition or secession, domination by one side, or union with any other country. The plan ends the status quo. It ends the division of the country. It safeguards the identity of Cyprus and of each community in it. It preserves the integrity of the citizenship of the country. These are prizes that have eluded us in all previous negotiations. They are prizes of which all of you could rightly be proud.

The federal government provided for in the plan is designed to function from day one. It is designed to function effectively. It cannot be blocked by one-man vetoes, and it has machinery to resolve deadlocks. It would allow a reunited Cyprus to speak with one voice internationally, particularly in the European Union.

The people of each community would largely run their own affairs, through constituent states which they administer. The plan fully respects individual human rights, including the rights of those of you who were forced to leave your homes. It allows many people to return, and to get all or some of their property back. Anyone who does not get all their property back would be paid full and secure compensation. The people who have to move to a new home, because of the territorial adjustment, will be helped to do so in a dignified and proper manner.

We have worked closely with the European Union, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to make a number of changes, to ensure that the plan is economically and financially sound.

No one pretends that implementation will be straightforward. But let me reassure you: the world stands

ready to help you to make this plan work. That was the clear message from the donors' conference in Brussels last week. It is the clear message of the European Union, which is ready to act to help accommodate the settlement and assist in its implementation. And it is also the clear message of the United Nations Security Council.

I have called on the Security Council to act to reassure you that the plan will be fully and faithfully implemented, in full conformity with the principles of the United Nations Charter. I am pleased that the Council is responding to my call.

The United Nations will station a new and robust operation in Cyprus, to help maintain security and hold all parties to their commitments, including the commitments to withdraw troops and hand back territory.

We are determined that neither the events of 1963, nor those of 1974, will ever be repeated.

After 40 years of conflict, and 30 years of division, the choice before you this Saturday is one of truly historic importance. The vision of the plan is simple: reunification and reconciliation, in safety and security, in the European Union. The world is ready to help you turn that vision of the future into reality. But we cannot take that fateful decision for you. We await your call.