

Visita a Cipro del Ministro degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale Luigi Di Maio

(Nicosia, 9 marzo 2021)

Dichiarazioni alla stampa del Ministro degli Affari Esteri della Repubblica di Cipro, Nikos Christodoulides

Today I welcome my friend, the Italian Foreign Minister, Luigi Di Maio, to Nicosia.

His presence at this important juncture and the substantial consultations we have had are proof of our common will and desire to further strengthen the traditionally excellent relations between our two countries, and of course the historical ties between the peoples of Cyprus and Italy.

To this end, my friend Luigi and I exchanged views today on practical ways to enhance our cooperation in existing areas of action, as well as to expand it to new fields of cooperation.

In this context, we have set specific priorities as regards our bilateral cooperation, with an emphasis on trade and investment, tourism, education, research and culture.

We noted with satisfaction that trade between the two countries is extensive and welcomed the initiative of the Italian-Cypriot Chamber of Commerce, which successfully organized last December, the 3rd Cyprus-Italy Business Forum, with the aim of creating favorable conditions and opportunities for economic, trade and tourism cooperation. At the same time, in the field of Research and Innovation, we have put forward the signing of a bilateral "Executive Program" with the aim of financing joint research projects.

Furthermore, we discussed our cooperation as regards antiquities, in the framework of which the signing of a relevant Memorandum of Cooperation for the protection of cultural property is promoted, as well as our bilateral cooperation in the field of education, and more specifically the renewal of the relevant Cooperation Program for the period 2021-2025.

Dear Friends,

Undoubtedly, our bilateral relations have been upgraded in recent years, due to the energy cooperation of the Republic of Cyprus with the Italian company ENI, which carries out work in the Cyprus EEZ. I consider it a fortunate coincidence that our meeting today takes place on the same day as the Ministerial Meeting of the EMGF (the Energy Forum in Cairo), of which both Cyprus and Italy, together with five other States, are the founding members, sending messages of cooperation in the wider region. It is our common belief that the momentum of energy synergies created by the EMGF are of strategic importance for the wider region and beyond, and we also agree that participation in the Forum is open to all States in the region that are ready to share our vision for regional cooperation under international law, including the Convention on the Law of the Sea, and the basic principles of good neighborly relations. Our sole goal is to create and strengthen conditions of peace, cooperation, stability and prosperity in the wider region.

With my friend Luigi, we also discussed regional developments in the wider southeastern Mediterranean, in our common neighborhood, with particular emphasis on the cooperation of our countries in Med 7, the situation in Libya, and of course immigration. Cyprus attaches great importance to achieving stability in Libya, and supports the efforts of the United Nations and the political process of establishing a provisional government that will lead the country to the December elections.

With regard to Immigration, I would like to emphasize our positive approach to the text of the Immigration and Asylum Pact, and our strong desire - as a front-line Member State under excessive pressure, to strengthen the principle of solidarity and to establish a binding reallocation mechanism for beneficiaries of international protection.

As expected, we also discussed developments in the Eastern Mediterranean, in the light of Turkish illegal activities and the relevant, joint EU decisions and conclusions, and in view of the forthcoming European Council later this month. The sovereignty of the Union is rooted and inextricably linked to the sovereignty of its 27 Member States and therefore, by collectively defending the sovereignty of the Member States, we also ensure the sovereignty of the Union itself.

In this context, and on the basis of the relevant EU Conclusions, Turkey is expected to demonstrate in practice its sincere will to improve its relations with the EU and each and every Member State. Any decision to adopt a positive agenda in EU-Turkey relations depends solely on Ankara, which must, among other, end any illegal activities, both on land and at sea, but must also contribute substantially to achieving a solution to a predominantly European problem such as the Cyprus problem, based on the relevant UN resolutions and EU principles and values. A solution to the Cyprus problem on the basis of the bizonal, bicomunal federation, which will be sustainable and functional. Cyprus is and will remain an EU Member after reunification, and given Turkey's publicly proclaimed wish to strengthen Euro-Turkish relations, the EU's role in the negotiations is - possibly more than ever before – of crucial and vital importance.

My dear friend Luigi,

I warmly welcome you again to Cyprus, thank you for the honest and constructive talks we had. I look forward to continuing them during the working lunch that will follow.