

**Speech of H.E. Mr. Mark Calcoen,  
Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium to Cyprus  
At the occasion of the presentation of his credentials  
To His Excellency Mr. Nikos Christodoulides,  
President of the Republic of Cyprus**

I have the honour to present today to Your Excellency the Letters of Credence by which His Majesty the King of the Belgians accredits me as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Belgium to the Republic of Cyprus, as well as the Letters of Recall of my predecessor.

As non-resident ambassador to the Republic of Cyprus, I will do my utmost best and will devote myself to improving our bilateral relations as well as the wider European framework which determines our future as members of the European Union. Belgium is a longstanding partner of the Republic of Cyprus, which we recognized on the day of its independence on 16 August 1960. As such, Belgium was the 9th country to do so. Throughout my mission, it will be my objective to further enhance these good relations in as many sectors as possible.

Belgium is in favour of a lasting and fair settlement of the Cyprus question to reach and guarantee security, stability and prosperity for Cyprus, for Europe and for the wider Eastern Mediterranean region. Therefore, the parameters of the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and the bizonal, bicomunal federation of political equality continue to offer the basis for negotiations between the relevant parties, which Belgium hopes can be resumed as soon as possible. If the Belgian constitutional model can be of any inspiration, Belgium is ready to offer its expertise, as it has also done in the past, in the framework of the Support Group for Cyprus in the fields of taxation, social security and labour inspection.

Belgium and Cyprus share the same outlook for the major global problems, as democracies and members of the European Union, in areas such as climate change, environmental protection, security, trade or migration. Belgium will hold the rotating presidency of the EU in the first half of 2024, for the 13th time. Cyprus will exercise this presidency for the 2nd time since its accession to the EU in 2004, in the first half of 2026.

These presidencies offer the possibility to our countries to significantly contribute to the strengthening of the EU, both internally and externally, and to further improve the lives of the European citizens through solidarity and a common commitment to solving the challenges ahead of us. Belgium, like Cyprus, is also committed to preserving our common values, which are at the heart of the EU, in particular the rule of law. As the first

non-resident ambassador in Cyprus to hold the EU presidency since 2020, I will continue the work of previous EU presidencies in organizing activities locally to enhance the dialogue between Cypriote authorities and EU member states. Belgium is very willing to work together with Cyprus in the important legislative, political and strategic work which will define the Belgian EU presidency at the end of the current legislature of the EU Parliament and in world affairs. I am certain that both countries will continue to work closely together in addressing jointly and effectively all challenges facing us.

Belgium and Cyprus have regular political and administration-level contacts. I am happy to announce that on November 2 the Belgian minister of energy will pay a visit to Cyprus for talks with her counterpart. I am sure that the European agenda of both countries will further enhance these contacts.

Bilateral people-to-people contacts are enhanced by the 30.000 Belgian tourists visiting Cyprus yearly and enjoying Cypriote hospitality, as well as through the 400 Belgians living permanently in the Republic of Cyprus, mainly in or around Limassol, Larnaca, Paphos and Nicosia. I see further room for strengthening these contacts. Belgium is also grateful to Cyprus for its assistance in evacuation matters of our compatriots from third countries, as was the case in the evacuation from Sudan recently or from the Middle East.

In the field of commerce and investment, our trade relations have been on an upswing since the end of the Covid crisis with important increases in 2021 and 2022 of both imports and exports from and to Cyprus. There are a few Belgian investments in Cyprus. I hope that our economic and commercial relations will grow during my mission to reach an even higher level.

Lastly, I'd like to mention that H.M. the King of the Belgians has appointed, on 1 October 2023, Mr. Nicolas Lanitis of Limassol as the new honorary consul of Belgium in Cyprus. I want to express my gratitude for the important services that successive honorary consuls have rendered to Belgium since almost a century.

In conclusion, Mr. President, allow me to convey to you, to the Government and to the people of the Republic of Cyprus the warm wishes of friendship and prosperity that H.M. the King of the Belgians expresses to Your Excellency.