

Speech of H.E. Mr. Domenico Giani
Ambassador of the Sovereign Military Hospitalier Order of St. John Of
Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta to Cyprus
At the occasion of the presentation of his credentials
To his Excellency Mr. Nikos Christodoulides, President of the Republic
of Cyprus
20 May 2024

Your Excellency Mr. President,

It is an honor, a privilege, and a responsibility to represent His Most Eminent Highness the Prince and Grand Master of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta in Cyprus. I am committed to dedicating myself with energy and determination to this mission, benefiting both Cyprus and the Order I represent while continuing the historic bond between the Order and Cyprus, an island that witnessed the Order's history from 1210 to 1421. This strong relationship must be further solidified in a spirit of friendship and trust.

Modern relations between Cyprus and the Order of Malta date back to June 2012 when a formal agreement establishing diplomatic relations was signed in Rome. During my mission, under the wise guidance of the Order's higher authorities, particularly the Grand Chancellor, I aim to further develop these relations, especially focusing on the Order's humanitarian diplomacy, a mission we have carried out for over a millennium in service to others.

The Republic of Cyprus and the Sovereign Order of Malta can contribute to Mediterranean and Middle Eastern dialogue, supported by respective diplomatic efforts and initiatives. This is particularly relevant in the current historical context, addressing issues such as the Gaza crisis, promoting religious freedom and human rights, preserving places of worship, managing migration flows, and addressing socio-health service gaps in the Mediterranean region. Our collaboration includes the Strovolos Hospital project in cooperation with the local municipality and the Ministry of Health, providing neonatal pediatric care and support for mothers, and assisting refugees through the Order's medical and social activities in key countries for regional stability.

Cyprus's strategic location along migration routes to Europe poses significant challenges, which we address through humanitarian aid, health services, education, and integration efforts for migrants. Moreover, the 50th anniversary of the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus is a poignant reminder of the island's division and suffering. It is time for peace, liberation, and reunification of the country, ensuring fundamental rights and freedoms for all citizens. Additionally, the growing presence of non-moderate Islam in the north raises further concerns. In this context, the resumption of inter-Cypriot negotiations as soon as possible, according to the parameters agreed upon in the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions, within the framework of a bizonal and bicomunal federation with political equality, is essential.

The Order of Malta remains committed to serving others with love and dedication, sharing our moral values, and recognizing each person's uniqueness. Our response to unmet needs demonstrates the increasing generosity of our members in addressing urgent health and social emergencies.

1. Strovolos Project: The Order of Malta, the Incubator of Love Foundation, and Strovolos Municipality have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to develop a support building for families and children at the Arch. Makarios III Pediatric Hospital. The project includes occupational and physical therapy for premature infants, psychological support, parental guidance, and more. Funding is expected from European, governmental, and private sources.

2. Pournara Refugee Camp: There is potential to develop a small medical center outside one of Cyprus's largest refugee camps, offering basic medical and nursing care. The necessary infrastructure can be established through temporary structures equipped with essential medical facilities.

In addition, the Order's participation in the Cyprus Forum on 'Protection and Conservation of Mediterranean Cultural Heritage' highlights our commitment to intercultural dialogue and regional stability. We aim to strengthen our ties with Cyprus through social assistance and migration projects, including the establishment of a relief corps and other social initiatives in close cooperation with local authorities.

Completing the negotiation process for the cooperation agreement is essential, as it would facilitate the realization of the Order's projects. I hope this agreement can be signed soon to expedite our efforts. I am committed to ensuring that this agreement, which would significantly enhance our operational capabilities, comes to fruition. To this end, we also intend to work diligently on the

establishment of a relief corps and an association of the Knights of Malta, ready to respond to emergencies and needs, and to coordinate social projects closely with local authorities.

I am ready to fully engage, leveraging my extensive experience in Vatican security services and collaboration with law enforcement agencies, to address delicate issues discussed with your close associates.

Mr. President, I extend my full availability - in the name of the Order of Malta - and look forward to our continued cooperation in promoting peace and humanitarian aid.

I avail myself of this opportunity to extend my most respectful regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Domenico Forni". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. The first name "Domenico" is written in a larger, more prominent script, while "Forni" is written in a smaller, more compact script to its right.