

Speech of H.E. Mr. Michael H. Tatham
Ambassador of the United Kingdom
at the occasion of the presentation of his credentials
To His Excellency Mr. Nikos Christodoulides, President of the Republic of Cyprus
Friday, 22 November 2024

Your Excellency,

I am delighted and honoured to have been appointed as the new British High Commissioner to Cyprus.

Cyprus has unique and special ties to the United Kingdom. Our recent histories are closely entwined, something which brings complexities but also rich cultural and people-to-people connections that underpin and power our bilateral partnership. Today, thousands of British citizens reside in Cyprus and over a million British tourists visit Cyprus each year, experiencing the many cultural attractions and leisure activities that Cyprus offers. The vibrant Cypriot community in the United Kingdom contributes greatly to my country's prosperity and diversity. In this month of remembrance, I pay tribute to the thousands of Cypriot volunteers who served as part of allied forces during the Second World War, some of whom paid the ultimate sacrifice.

This year's fiftieth anniversary of the division of Cyprus underlines the fact that a settlement is long overdue. Notwithstanding Cyprus' impressive economic growth, the continuing division of the island inhibits the country from realising its full economic and human potential. The British Government is firmly committed to the UN-led process to seek a lasting and fair solution to the Cyprus issue that will end the tragic division of the island. The British Government will energetically discharge its responsibilities as a guarantor power, Permanent Member of the UN Security Council and a major contributor to UNFICYP.

The British Government welcomes your meeting last month with the UN Secretary-General and the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community. My Government looks forward to participating in due course in the broader format meeting that is envisaged as follow-up. The United Kingdom will do everything it can to support a settlement that leads to reunification. While the current division persists, the United Kingdom will continue to support contacts between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities in people-to-people and civil society formats as an investment in the values and principles of coexistence which we hope will underpin a future reunified Cyprus.

I am fortunate to be starting this role at a time of strengthened bilateral partnership between the United Kingdom and Cyprus. Our two countries have many shared interests and face many shared challenges. At a time of instability and conflict in the Middle East, the United Kingdom and Cyprus are each committed to regional de-escalation and to a substantial international humanitarian response. The United Kingdom greatly appreciates the creative and constructive role that Cyprus, and you personally, have played in regional

diplomacy. The United Kingdom has been a strong and early supporter of Cyprus' initiative to establish a maritime aid corridor to Gaza. Hundreds of British citizens have benefited directly from the valuable logistic support that Cyprus has provided during evacuation operations from troubled regions of the world. Similarly, the United Kingdom appreciates the strong and principled stance taken by Cyprus in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

I look forward to working closely with the Government of Cyprus on these and other international challenges. I congratulate Cyprus on its election to the UN Human Rights Council for the 2025-2027 term and hope that there can be close cooperation between the UK and Cyprus in this important area.

As likeminded countries, bound by common values, rich cultural ties and shared membership of the Commonwealth, I firmly believe there is scope to intensify still further the range, depth and level of ambition of our bilateral partnership, including in areas such as security, sanctions cooperation, trade and educational links. One of my Government's foremost priorities is to reset the United Kingdom's relationship with Europe following our departure from the European Union. A strengthened relationship with Cyprus is a vital component of that strategic goal. I welcome your positive and productive meeting last month with my Prime Minister. I am determined to build on the momentum from this meeting, including through the forthcoming meeting between the British and Cypriot Foreign Ministers and a further session of our bilateral Strategic Dialogue.

It is a privilege to have been entrusted by my Government with this important role. I will discharge it with enthusiasm and with a strong commitment to taking the relationship from strength to strength.