

FIRST ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE UK-CYPRUS BILATERAL MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ESTABLISHING A STRATEGIC COOPERATION, 14 DECEMBER 2023

The UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Director General for Europe, Peter Wilson and the Republic of Cyprus Ministry of Foreign Affairs Permanent Secretary, Kyriacos Kouros chaired the first annual review of the [UK-Cyprus Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MoU) on 14 December 2023. They discussed progress under the specified MoU policy areas that would further strengthen the ties between the UK and Cyprus in support of our shared objectives and in addressing urgent global challenges. Dr Kouros and Mr Wilson also identified future initiatives to build on our close and historic relations, and joint ambition to work even closer in the pursuit of new opportunities on the basis of mutual respect.

The UK and Cyprus reaffirmed their commitment to work closely together for a just and lasting settlement to the Cyprus Problem within the UN parameters, as prescribed in the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

Foreign and regional policy

The chairs recalled the breadth of our shared foreign policy objectives and our cooperation in bilateral and multilateral fora over the last 12 months. The UK and Cyprus have continued to stand in solidarity with Ukraine against Russian aggression. Both countries have enhanced cooperation on sanctions compliance to target those who have enabled sanctioned Russia oligarchs to hide their assets.

Cyprus and the UK have taken a robust position in response to the situation in Israel and Gaza, reiterating Israel's right to self-defence whilst urging restraint and adherence to international law and international humanitarian law. We are cooperating to get desperately needed humanitarian aid into Gaza, including through operationalising the Cypriot maritime corridor from Larnaca (AMALTHEA Plan).

The chairs acknowledged the effective bilateral cooperation demonstrated earlier this year in evacuating and repatriating civilians from Sudan and Israel, including British and Cypriot nationals, as part of the Cypriot crisis management ESTIA Plan.

There has been a regular exchange of views on developments in in the Eastern Mediterranean, in the wider Middle East, as well as on China and Iran. The UK and Cyprus agree that the security and stability of the wider region, on the basis of full respect of International Law and the fundamental principles of the UN Charter, is a key common objective and remain committed to engaging pro-actively towards this aim. The chairs re-affirmed their desire to further deepen our foreign policy cooperation and committed to holding a series of strategic dialogues on priority foreign policy issues over the coming year, including on EU-UK relations, with due regard to the evolving relationship on foreign and security policy issues.

In the context of the Commonwealth, Cyprus and the UK will closely consult for a results-oriented Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Samoa, in 2024.

Defence and security

High-level defence engagement has continued this year focussed on training, education and interoperability, culminating in a renewed Bilateral Defence Cooperation Plan signed during the Ministry of Defence staff talks in September 2023. The Plan sets out our intention to enhance our engagement on defence education, exercises, and sharing expertise over the coming year. The chairs agreed to consider opportunities for engagement with partners on capabilities of mutual interest, including firefighting.

Acknowledging the usefulness and political momentum that comes with meetings at political level, the chairs encouraged that meetings are held between UK and Cypriot Defence Ministers on an annual basis.

Education, culture, science and innovation

Mr Wilson and Dr Kouros recognised the vital role that education and culture plays in strengthening people to people ties that underpin the bilateral relationship and acknowledged that the nature of these ties have changed since the UK exit from the European Union. They agreed to consider approaches to enhance education cooperation, including institutional links between UK and Cypriot universities. Work will continue to promote closer collaboration in research and innovation and enhance collaboration between creative professionals.

Trade and Prosperity

The chairs committed to supporting further efforts, such as exchange of expertise, establishing joint ventures, reducing barriers and costs, to promote trade and investment opportunities between the UK and Cyprus, with a particular focus on priority sectors including energy, environment, financial and professional services, technology and healthcare.

For further coordination and adaptation of best practices, the chairs agreed to encourage trade and investment promotional bodies to hold meetings on an annual basis.

Maritime affairs

In recognition of both countries' priorities as historic maritime nations, the chairs welcomed the signature in February of a Memorandum of Understanding between the UK and Cyprus on maritime affairs. Looking forward, there is agreement to prioritise engagement between the UK and Cyprus on seafarers' safety and green transition as key deliverables under the agreement.

Climate

In recognition of both Cypriot and UK shared priorities around climate change, including on commitments made at COP28 and through the Commonwealth, the chairs welcomed the opportunity to work more closely together through the Powering Past Coal Alliance.

Following the Commonwealth Heads of Government commitment in Kigali 2022, the UK and Cyprus will engage constructively so that the Commonwealth Oceans Ministerial Meeting to be hosted by Cyprus in April 2024, will record the principles and priorities of a future 'Commonwealth Ocean Declaration' and agree upon a roadmap towards its adoption at the Samoa meeting in October 2024.

Law enforcement, Serious Organised Crime and Terrorism

Dr Kouros and Mr Wilson noted the excellent level of existing bilateral law enforcement cooperation, including working together to tackle Serious Organised Crime, counterterrorism capacity building, strong judicial cooperation, and countering Gender Based Violence. Both recognised the potential to further expand this cooperation through information sharing, as appropriate, and capability building.

Legal and Justice Affairs

The chairs acknowledged the shared legal heritage between both Cyprus and the UK, in being common law states, which is underpinned by the strong and vibrant links between the legal professions in both countries. Both agreed to support the exchange of legal expertise and best practise, building on the visits that have taken place since the MoU was signed last year.

Consular and People-to-People

Over 300,000 Cypriots reside in the UK and over one million Brits visit Cyprus every year. Both acknowledged the significant personal links between both countries and agreed to continue efforts to promote these links through public diplomacy by our respective High Commissions. The chairs also agreed to consider opportunities to enhance cooperation on the support we provide to our citizens visiting both the UK and Cyprus.

Nicosia, 14 December 2023

Kyriacos Kouros, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus

Peter Wilson, Director General Europe of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland