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# Address by the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr Nikos Christodoulides, at the 80th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations

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Madame President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We stand at the brink of a precipice.

International order, as we know it, is challenged in an unprecedented manner, 80 years since the United Nations (UN) emerged out of World War II.

Today, we stand before drastic, unpredictable geopolitical shifts.

Instability that appears to spiral.

An uncharted landscape that seems resistant to the international order and norms as we know them.

We are witnessing devastating wars and unimaginable humanitarian catastrophe and human suffering.

Blatant violations of international law and international humanitarian law that bring our system to its knees.

We stand before the rise of use of force against sovereign states, that constantly escalate and expand threatening regional security and stability.

States are sponsoring malign actors to destabilise. Disrupting critical maritime routes.

The use of new means of warfare is rising, without even the most basic safeguards in place.

Global security is constantly undermined.

At the same time, we are faced with the challenge of the uncontrolled expansion of technology and AI, threatening our security, and the well-being of our children.

And climate change is looming – threatening livelihoods, economies, creating new migration routes. And inequalities are becoming embedded.

The world is changing rapidly.

And while there can be no doubt that the UN has served a noble cause, and that together, we have achieved tremendous progress, at this critical moment of inflection, we have a Responsibility to recognise the shortcomings.

To admit that we have lagged behind.

That we have failed along the way.

And these admissions need to stir us into action.

We must urgently evolve to be fit to effectively address the immense, complex challenges we are faced with.

Ladies and gentlemen – This is our Moment of Responsibility.

Collective Responsibility and Individual State Responsibility – inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing. The scale and nature of the challenges we face, require both.

“Better Together” is the theme for this Assembly.

But beyond Better, we are also “Stronger Together”.

More Resilient Together.

This is the moment to renew our collective commitment and stand firmly and boldly in support of Multilateralism and International Law.

Dialogue and Diplomacy are the sole path to lasting stability and security.

Dialogue and Diplomacy over violence. Each and Every time.

And most importantly, this is the moment to transform pledges into Bold Action. Into Change.

Ladies and gentlemen, history will look back to this moment in time.

And it will be unforgiving.

It will judge us all, not by the declaratory statements we pronounce, but by the change we enable.

We will be judged by the change we become – as states, as governments, as leaders that have been elected by our citizens to deliver.

Ladies and gentlemen, my country, Cyprus, walks this path of Responsibility.

And it stands ready to step up further.

To assume even more its role as an enabler of security and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Greater Middle East.

As a driver of cooperation, underpinned by a vision of strength through partnership with like-minded countries, and as a safe harbour in turbulent waters.

Determined to transform our geography in a complex region into a blessing.

By building on our long-standing historical ties with our neighbours, that are anchored on trust, mutual respect, cooperation.

Always part of the solution to the region's challenges.

As a Credible, Reliable, Responsible Partner.

We have proven this, time and time again.

Cyprus will always be a stable, trustworthy, safe harbour.

Let me be clear. This is not theoretical.

It takes shape and form through concrete initiatives that build on Cyprus' role as a hub of stability and cooperation in a challenging part of the world.

Cyprus has consistently provided the necessary infrastructure and support for the evacuation of foreign nationals from areas of danger or conflict. From Sudan, from Lebanon, from Israel, from Iran.

Following the barbaric Hamas terrorist attack of October 7<sup>th</sup>, and the subsequent war that has led to a humanitarian tragedy in Gaza, Cyprus assumed, yet again, its moral responsibility to its region.

We did so through the development of the Amalthea maritime corridor for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the civilian population in Gaza.

The route was reactivated as recently as this past week.

We worked with like-minded partners – the United Arab Emirates, the United States, the European Union (EU), the UK, and others. And we delivered.

Furthermore, in the face of persecutions in the region towards religious and other minorities, Cyprus could not remain idle.

Proving our long-standing commitment to upholding fundamental rights and freedoms, demonstrating once again Responsibility, we appointed a Special Envoy on the protection of religious freedom and the protection of minorities in the Middle East.

At the same time, Cyprus has responded to the calls of our neighbours for assistance in the face of fires, sending our brave firefighters as reinforcement. And our neighbours have reciprocated.

Also, as part of our regional Responsibility in addressing climate change, Cyprus and Jordan's proposed initiative for a European firefighting hub in Cyprus, covering the region is now on the path for implementation by the EU.

The aforementioned examples, Dear friends, are only a snapshot of Cyprus's active, tangible Responsibility.

And I am very proud that my country walks this path of Responsibility.

And we are determined to expand it.

Always part of the solution. Never part of the problem.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Cyprus stands ready to assume its regional Responsibility also in the context of bringing an end to the war in Gaza, and given our proximity, to play a role in its reconstruction.

Let me be clear: there are no substitutes for peace.

This war, must end.

A first necessary step is the immediate ceasefire in Gaza and I hope that President Trump's initiative has a positive outcome.

At the same time, the humanitarian catastrophe must be alleviated. This means, unhindered flow of aid in Gaza.

The displacement must also end. International humanitarian law must be respected.

We call with the same fervour for the immediate release of all hostages.

And, as unreachable as it may seem at this moment, we must not lose sight of the path for peace. For a two-state solution in line with UN Security Council Resolutions.

We have a Responsibility to continue our work for a future in which Israel and Palestine live side by side in conditions of lasting security and peace.

And, we must be clear and unequivocal that Hamas, a terrorist organisation, has no place in such a future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As part of our Responsibility, Cyprus will assume the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU in January of 2026.

The EU, that has evolved into an unprecedented political union, embodying the essence of multilateralism, anchored on respect for the UN Charter.

It is a project of collective Responsibility that delivers.

A unifying force of Stability, Security and Prosperity.

The EU Presidency is yet another moment of Responsibility for Cyprus.

Europe's heart will beat for 6 months from the Union's last divided member state, under occupation since the 1974 Turkish invasion.

We will exercise our Responsibility fully aware of what is at stake:

An imperative need to deliver stronger Multilateralism, more integration, and more cooperation between Europe and the world.

To deliver a stronger, more secure, more autonomous Union.

Committed to supporting partners, focusing also on the Eastern Mediterranean and the Greater Middle East.

Supporting and investing in strategic partners that are pillars of stability in the region such as Jordan and Egypt.

Working together with our Lebanese partners to ensure long lasting stability in the country.

Working to ensure stability in Syria, inclusivity, respect to religious freedoms and protection of minorities.

Assuming more Responsibility as a Union for our security, and that of our neighbourhood.



Ladies and gentlemen,

Cyprus will assume another role of Responsibility – for the first time – as a member of the Human Rights Council for the period 2025-2027.

It is in the same spirit that we also proudly presented our candidature for the Presidency of the 81<sup>st</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly. As a member state that embodies and embraces the principles of Multilateralism, Inclusivity, Bridge Building and Responsibility.

Madame President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Russian aggression against Ukraine in violation of the UN Charter must serve as a wake-up call.

As we condemn the use of force against a sovereign nation, the killing of civilians, the forced disappearance of children, the destruction and displacement, we have an obligation to remember:

We must collectively act against aggressors no matter who they are.

Appeasing the aggressor never yields results. History demonstrates this clearly.

Each time we turn a blind eye to violation of territorial integrity and sovereignty of states Anywhere in the world, we create space and opportunity for the next aggressor. And this time it can be bordering your country.

In 2022 Russia invaded a sovereign nation, Ukraine, violating the UN Charter.

In 1974, Turkey invaded a sovereign nation, Cyprus, violating the UN Charter.

The violation is equal. The suffering. The invasion and occupation.

Cyprus is under occupation by Turkey for 51 years.

Tens of thousands displaced.

Women raped.

Destruction of cultural and religious heritage.

The fenced town of Varosha, held hostage by Turkey, awaiting for its lawful inhabitants to return, as the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions have prescribed for Turkey to allow.

A policy of illegal settlements to change the demographic character of the country.

Families waiting for the fate of their loved ones for decades. As a young boy in those early years after the invasion, the images of mothers and children weeping for their loved ones have been engraved in my memory.

The Playbook of occupiers is always the same.

Ladies and gentlemen,

From this very podium yesterday, Mr Erdogan preached the world on peace and accountability. He pointed the finger to others, for crimes Turkey itself commits every single day.

That is selective sensitivity and hypocrisy of the highest form.

Illegality cannot yield legality.

Illegality stemming from use of force cannot be recognised.

No matter who the perpetrator is, no matter who the victim is.

Ladies and gentlemen, Politicians are judged not by their words but by their actions.

It is what distinguishes Politicians from Leaders.

Cyprus has proven time and again that it is a Reliable, Responsible actor. A country that not only "Talks the Talk" but also "Walks the Walk" of Responsibility.

And my call today to Mr Erdogan is to join that path of Responsibility:

To end the occupation, through negotiations for a comprehensive settlement that will reunify Cyprus in a bizonal bicomunal federation with political equality.

Always in line with UN Security Council Resolutions, EU law values and principles.

This is the only way.

Therefore, let me repeat: the call for Responsibility is the loudest for my own country. I am ready for this moment of Responsibility, ready to deliver on the call of history to reunify



Cyprus, to reunify my people, Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

Madame President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We stand at the brink of a precipice.

And while the impulse may be to shrink away from the immense Responsibility we inherited from the visionaries who stood here 80 years ago, now is the moment for us to assume our Responsibility – collectively, and individually as states.

Rest assured that Cyprus will continue to do its part.

By being Responsible. By being advocates for Responsibility.

For the good of humanity. For our Peoples.

(RM/IA/LY)

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