

# CYPRUS

## A EUROPEAN ISLAND IN THE COMMONWEALTH

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The chief architect of European unity, Jean Monnet, argued during the creation of the European Economic Community that "we are not building a Coalition of States but a Union of Peoples." His vision profoundly encapsulates the values and principles not only of the European Union (EU), but of the Commonwealth (CW) as well. During its long existence, the CW has been a force for good. Despite ups and downs, it has been promoting mutually shared objectives such as democracy, human rights, the rule of law, trade and economic development. CW and EU values have thus much in common. Do the CW and the EU have ways to go to become more relevant to their citizens? They most certainly do.

Pulled by the strong ideational and structural forces of the CW and the EU, Cyprus joined the two organisations in 1961 and 2004, respectively. Both were strategically important choices. Cyprus is one of the three states, together with Malta and the United Kingdom, which belongs to both institutions.

Membership of these two families is not contradictory or mutually exclusive. It is a fallacy to suggest so, as some do, within the context of the EU debate in the UK. All CW countries belong to regional organisations; and there is complementarity and mutual enrichment that results from this.

Membership of the EU has its obvious advantages for Cyprus; but in many

ways, the CW is its natural family, given the commonalities of a working language and legal systems and institutions. The CW offers Cyprus access to a substantial global network, especially to countries where it does not have a diplomatic or consular presence. The network is also useful when Cyprus is in the running for election to UN bodies. Politically, my homeland has always enjoyed the solidarity and support of the CW. Along with the other two EU member states of the CW, Cyprus can bring to the EU the CW perspective for the benefit of the peoples of the CW, be it on climate change, education, youth and women's empowerment, trade and development, to mention but a few. Perhaps an institutionalised, mutually beneficial dialogue between the EU and the CW can be established.

Experiences of life differ widely. We each make our contributions from very different 'weltanschauungs' and backgrounds. Despite this reality, we are all committed to the same goals and to a common purpose: to address in practical and tangible terms, the concerns of the citizens of member states of the CW and in particular of the small and vulnerable, and to help each other build a brighter and united future for ourselves and for our children. This is more poignant in an overly interdependent global village. And for the CW family of more than two billion people, of which over 60% are under the age of 30, it is our responsibility to build the future right. The challenge, as in the EU, is to turn vision and policies into praxis.

Being a member of both organisations, gives Cyprus the opportunity and the vantage point to be active in various discussions related to building a brighter future for the generations to come. Cyprus has been an active member of the CW, having hosted the CHOGM in 1993, several ministerial meetings, and currently serving in the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group. Cyprus accepts the responsibilities and challenges associated with the double role that it can play and is ready and determined to offer its own contributions and assistance within the EU for the development and well-being of our fellow partners in the Commonwealth.