

# UK-Cyprus Joint Statement

Following the meeting between the President of the Republic of Cyprus, H.E. Nikos Christodoulides, and the British Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer MP in Nicosia on 10 December 2024, the UK Foreign Secretary, Rt Hon David Lammy MP, hosted Cypriot Foreign Minister, H. E. Constantinos Kombos, in London to open the second annual review of the [UK-Cyprus Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MoU) on 17 December 2024.

The UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Director General for Europe, Dame Deborah Bronnert and the Cypriot Ministry of Foreign Affairs Permanent Secretary, His Excellency Andreas Kakouris then chaired a senior officials meeting to assess progress made since the last annual review under the UK-Cyprus MoU to strengthen the substantial ties between the UK and Cyprus founded on our shared objectives, our extensive people-to-people links and our shared interest in addressing urgent global challenges. Mr Kakouris and Dame Bronnert also identified future initiatives to build on our deep and historic relations and joint ambition to work even closer in the pursuit of new opportunities, on the basis of mutual respect. They welcomed the opportunity for officials to review progress in six months.

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 of a bizonal, bicomunal federation with political equality, as prescribed in the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

## Foreign and regional policy

The Chairs recalled our wide-ranging and deepening cooperation in pursuit of our shared foreign policy objectives, including in bilateral and multilateral fora over the last 12 months. Ministers met frequently in 2024 to discuss the most pressing foreign policy challenges.

The UK and Cyprus have continued to stand in solidarity with Ukraine against Russian aggression. We are working closely to share expertise and invest in capacity building to tackle illicit finance and establish a new Cypriot National Sanctions Implementation Unit. Both countries are sharing expertise and enhancing cooperation on sanctions compliance to target those who have enabled sanctioned Russian oligarchs to hide their assets.

Cyprus and the UK have maintained a robust position in response to the conflict in Israel, Gaza, Lebanon and Syria. There has been significant ministerial and senior official dialogue on the crises, which has helped us coordinate our approach on both political and humanitarian objectives. The UK provided early support for the Cypriot initiative to launch a maritime humanitarian corridor to Gaza (Amalthea Initiative) with RFA Lyme Bay delivering assistance from the Republic of Cyprus to Port Said in January 2024. Under Cyprus' leadership, the UK joined the USA, the UAE, the European Commission and Qatar to advance a Maritime Corridor to deliver Humanitarian Assistance to Gaza in March 2024. The respective Chairs noted Cyprus' leadership of the Amalthea Fund's Steering Group.

The Chairs acknowledged the effective bilateral cooperation over civilian evacuation planning, noting the vital role the Republic of Cyprus plays through its crisis management ESTIA Plan in supporting partners and allies to repatriate their citizens. They also welcomed their cooperation within the framework of the Non-combatant Evacuation Operations Coordination Group (NEOCG). The UK and Cyprus will continue to deepen our cooperation, including through sharing best practice and joint crisis management training for relevant officials.

Cyprus and the UK regularly exchange views on developments in Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean, the wider Middle East, the Indo-Pacific region 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 deepen foreign policy cooperation, including in International Organisations and committed to holding a series of strategic dialogues on priority foreign policy issues over the coming year. The Chairs look forward to the EU-UK Summit planned for early 2025 and welcomed the UK's desire for a reset in its relations with the EU. They further agreed to maintain regular official level engagement on areas of mutual interest. They also welcomed the first UK-Cyprus joint diplomats' training in early 2025.

In the context of the Commonwealth, Cyprus and the UK will cooperate closely for the effective implementation of the decisions taken at the Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Samoa in 2024.

## **Defence and security**

The Chairs welcomed the substantial Ministerial and other high-level defence engagement over the past 12 months, noting that this reflected the importance of the defence aspect of the bilateral relationship. This included four meetings between the UK and Cypriot Defence Ministers, and numerous engagements between the UK and Cypriot Chiefs of Defence. Deepening crises in the region have highlighted the importance of continuing to work closely in pursuit of our shared interests, in support of regional stability and security.

In addition to close coordination on regional security issues, bilateral defence engagement has continued to develop, with strong cooperation on military exercises, capability development, defence education, and expertise exchange. A renewed Bilateral Defence Co-operation Programme was signed during the Ministry of Defence Staff Talks in November 2024, which has been diversified and expanded. This showcases the breadth and mutual ambition of bilateral cooperation across multiple domains and can be demonstrated through further bilateral exercises, visits and training, as well as a focus on increasing interoperability in the coming year.

The UK and Cyprus are committed to further deepening the security and defence relationship and will continue to identify opportunities in this regard. We will upgrade the UK-Cyprus Defence MoU to develop a broader security and defence agreement to underpin, reinforce, and guide our shared endeavours.

This enhanced cooperation will include more consistent and timely information sharing, exemplified by a new General Security Agreement being negotiated by the UK and Cyprus National Security Authorities and to be signed in 2025, which will facilitate enhanced sharing and protection of classified information between our countries, creating new avenues of dialogue, collaboration, and partnership.

## **Education, culture, science and innovation**

The Chairs reiterated the vital role that education and culture play in strengthening people-to-people ties that underpin the bilateral relationship. They welcomed the resolution of the issue of visas for Cypriot teachers seconded by the Cypriot Ministry of Education to Cypriot community schools in the UK, enabling the continuation of vital cultural and linguistic enrichment for the Cypriot diaspora – the largest in the world.

The Chairs discussed enhancing education cooperation, noting the steps already taken this year. They welcomed focus group discussions on internationalising higher education and exploring opportunities for joint programming between UK and Cypriot universities, as part of the Commonwealth Higher Education Initiative. The Chairs welcomed ongoing UK and Cypriot collaboration to enhance the skills and capacity of cultural organisations and arts professionals. They further welcomed locally led initiatives in the fields of archaeology, arts and film that encourage academic and cultural exchanges in the UK and Cyprus.

Cooperation between British and Cypriot research institutions was promoted by the British Council through partner matching events in London in March and October 2024, focussing on priority areas such as environment, energy, health and maritime issues. Both sides will continue their efforts through the relevant support agencies to foster and expand research and innovation collaboration of their respective national ecosystems through the Horizon Europe Programme.

Work will continue to share expertise on school curriculum development and quality assurance, enhance dialogue on developing digital skills across the public and private sector, and promote collaboration between UK-Cypriot creative professionals.

The Chairs discussed efforts to enhance collaboration in the field of culture and opportunities to expand cooperation on artificial intelligence. Both sides considered capacity building for entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors, expertise exchange on museum and monument management, as well as issues relating to the effects of climate change and other factors on culture.

## **Trade and prosperity**

The Chairs noted the collaboration this year between the UK Department for Business and Trade and the Cypriot Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry. The UK Department for Business and Trade has also helped to facilitate further bilateral trade by supporting UK professional bodies in their activities in the Republic of

Cyprus, including arbitrators, chartered accountants, and legal and compliance practitioners.

The UK and Cyprus committed to exploring opportunities and formats to exchange knowledge, information and ideas in order to support mutually beneficial joint ventures. The Chairs welcomed the opportunity to enhance dialogue on increasing trade and investment between both countries, through a programme of reciprocal visits, particularly in the financial sector, energy, technology, artificial intelligence, healthcare, pharmaceuticals and food products. To this end, the UK and Cyprus will endeavour to share best practice to support the Cypriot investment campaign and to share expertise on the UK GREAT Campaign.

The UK and the Republic of Cyprus will also seek to initiate dialogue on reciprocal healthcare agreements and sharing expertise in specific medical fields. 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**

Following the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the field of shipping in 2023, the UK and the Republic of Cyprus are focussing on implementation of key priorities concerning seafarers' welfare and safety and green transition.

Looking ahead, the Chairs welcomed plans to share expertise on the implementation of the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC 2006) and the Republic of Cyprus representation at the International Shipping week in 2025.

## **Climate and Nature**

In recognition of Cypriot and UK environmental responsibilities for biodiversity on the island and commitments with regard to the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution including on commitments made at COP28, COP29 and CBD COP16 the Paris Agreement, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), the Agreement under UNLCOS on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) and through the delivery of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Chairs welcomed the proposals to further bilateral cooperation in this field. In support of the green transition, discussions have been initiated with the Cypriot Chamber of Commerce on sharing expertise regarding regional offshore wind energy projects.

The Chairs welcomed the Commonwealth Blue Charter initiative, launched in 2018 and emphasised Cyprus's commitment to sustainable ocean governance, including launching the Blue Charter Centre of Excellence, aimed at Commonwealth countries in marine conservation and blue economy development. They also recalled Cyprus's pivotal role in shaping the Commonwealth Ocean Declaration's priorities adopted via the Apia Commonwealth Ocean Declaration for One Resilient Common Future during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Apia, Samoa in 2024.

Looking ahead, the Chairs welcomed plans to initiate a formal dialogue on mitigation, adaptation and resilience, in order to collectively face the climate crisis our planet is facing. We foresee possible cooperation in areas such as extreme weather adaptation, including flooding and coastal defence, sharing best practice on the use of clean energy sources, as well as regional projects in the above-mentioned areas in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.

## **Law enforcement, serious organised crime and terrorism**

The Chairs noted that bilateral law enforcement cooperation continues to grow in strength, with excellent operational cooperation, as well as regular exchanges on counter-terrorism capacity building, intelligence analysis to tackle organised crime, strong judicial cooperation, and countering gender-based violence.

In the next period, the UK and Cyprus will consider further approaches to deepen our cooperation, including on irregular migration, modern slavery and human trafficking and tackling financial crime. This will be achieved through the exchange of best practices, information sharing, as appropriate, capability building and the delivery of training focussing on financial crime.

## **Legal and justice affairs**

The Chairs recalled the shared legal heritage as common law states, which is underpinned by the strong and vibrant links between the legal professions in both countries.

They noted ongoing efforts to support links between Cypriot and British legal professions including the presence of the Chair and Members of the Law Commission of England and Wales in Cyprus in 2024. The Chairs reaffirmed the shared legal heritage between the Republic of Cyprus and the UK and agreed to continue supporting the exchange of legal expertise and best practices.

## **Consular and people-to-people**

Over 300,000 Cypriots reside in the UK and over 1.2 million British citizens visit Cyprus every year. The Chairs agreed on the importance of supporting and promoting the significant personal links between both countries and to promote them further 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, including through high level exchanges, operational cooperation and training.

London, 17 December 2024

His Excellency Andreas Kakouris, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus

Dame Deborah Bronnert, Director General Europe of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland