

# Press Release

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## Statement by Peter Schieder on Cyprus referendum

Strasbourg, 16.04.2004 - Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly President Peter Schieder made the following statement today:

"Cyprus is approaching a crucial moment in its history. On 24 April 2004, Cypriots are invited to vote on the Annan Plan in simultaneous referenda. A "Yes" vote in both communities will put an end to the division of the island and bring a united Cyprus into the European Union. A victory for the "Noes" in either part of Cyprus, or a postponement of the referendum, will mean that only the Greek Cypriots join the EU on 1 May.

The news from Cyprus is conflicting. While the majority of Turkish Cypriots seem to favour a solution based on a revised Annan Plan, the Greek Cypriots appear set to massively oppose it. During the visit of Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Rapporteur Mátyás Eörsi (Hungary, LDR) to Cyprus from 11 to 15 January, all major Greek Cypriot political parties expressed their support for the Annan Plan. They are now campaigning either against it or for postponement of the referenda. This is extremely disappointing.

The Annan Plan is now the only opportunity the Cypriots have to see their island reunited within the European Union, and the referenda on 24 April are the best moment for it.

A "No" vote, or postponement of the referenda, would only deepen and perpetuate the division of Cyprus. This would also be a major blow to the authority of the UN and a bad omen for its involvement in settling international crises.

Those seeking to obstruct the settlement will bear grave political responsibility for this failure and should not be allowed to take advantage of it.

At the same time, the international community, and the European Union in particular, should not betray the hopes of those Cypriots who are in favour of the settlement, nor make them pay the price of failure."

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 626 members from the national parliaments of the 45 member states.

President: Peter Schieder (Austria, SOC); Secretary General of the Assembly: Bruno Haller.

Political Groups: SOC (Socialist Group); EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); LDR (Liberal, Democratic and Reformers' Group); EDG (European Democratic Group); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).