

**KIBRIS TÜRK İŞADAMLARI DERNEĞİ**



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Your Excellency President Anastasiades,

Ministers,

Members of the House of Parliament,

Honourable Ambassadors,

Distinguished Guests,

Members of OEB.

It gives me great honor and pleasure to speak in front of you today at the Annual General Meeting of OEB. OEB is a very important organization for the Turkish Cypriot Businessmen as we have been having very positive relationships with both Chairman Christos Michaelides and its members.

Having said that, and also having His Excellency President Anastasiades among us today, I would like to take this opportunity to express some of our views as Turkish Cypriot Businessmen regarding the never ending Cyprus Problem.

My organization ISAD has been a strong believer and supporter of a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation in Cyprus ever since it was formed two decades ago. We hailed the resumption of the negotiations back in 2014 and were particularly excited when an agreement was reached and signed by two Community Leaders regarding a “Joint Declaration” on 11th of February 2014, under the auspices of the UN Secretary General’s Good Offices mission.

Furthermore, when I got elected as the new Chairman of ISAD in December 2016, first thing I did during my speech at our AGM was to pledge our continued support for the negotiations with the aim of reaching a final peace settlement.

When I take a look at the ‘Joint Declaration’ today, two paragraphs strike out with particular importance. I quote:

“Paragraph 1: The status quo is unacceptable and its prolongation will have negative consequences for the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. The leaders affirmed that a settlement would have a positive impact on the entire region, while first and foremost benefiting Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, respecting democratic principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as each other’s distinct identity and integrity and ensuring their common future in a united Cyprus within the European Union.

Paragraph 7: The sides will seek to create a positive atmosphere to ensure the talks succeed. They commit to avoiding blame games or other negative public comments on the negotiations. They also commit to efforts to implement confidence building measures that will provide a dynamic impetus to the prospect for a united Cyprus.”

Fastforward to today, after almost 3.5 years of negotiating and with all the efforts spent we seem an arms length to reach a settlement but also possibly heading into a disaster if we do not reach a settlement within the upcoming months.

Dear All, we as Turkish Cypriot Businessmen see our future in a united, bi-zonal, bi-communal Cyprus. I myself, representing a generation who knows non other than a Cyprus with a never ending Problem, As in the great words of Martin Luther King Jr., “I have a dream!”... I have a dream in a re-unified Cyprus, where the only way forward is the cooperation between both communities in every aspect of life, but particularly business... This cooperation spilling over and out of Cyprus to include both our Ancestoral Motherlands and also all the other important players in our region particularly including Israel.. I have a dream where both communities live in peace and harmony as equal citizens under one flag, jointly benefiting from EU membership and wealth derived from our God blessed natural resources...

I further have a ‘Nightmare” where our two Community leaders fail to reach a bi-communal, bi-zonal agreement in the negotiations because of whatever circumstantial reason... I have a nightmare were conflict, not cooperation takes over our minds where Republic of Cyprus start drilling in June-July, and Turkey interferes… I have a nightmare where Cyprus looses its identity as an island of Peace in a region which is constantly burnt by ongoing conflicts and destruction and becomes one like its regional neighbors.

Distinguished Gentlemen, we have a golden opportunity in our hands to make our united island a ‘Dream Island’ and as a young Cypriot Businessmen I urge you all to give your full support to the negotiation process. I honestly believe that both Community leaders are working hard to reach a comprehensive settlement but are facing tough decisions with tough resistances… But the point is, whatever compromise our respective community makes today, will cost us far less that the Nightmares we could possibly face if we do not reach a settlement.

These are facts and we as clever businessmen all urgently need to face these facts and act accordingly before its too late.

I hope to make my next speech at the OEB, in front of you next year talking about the endless business possibilities of our hopefully by then reunited Island.

Thank you once again for your kind hospitality and have a wonderful AGM