

ATHENS NEWSFLASH

24/4/96 (ANA)

Major says international court should resolve Imia dispute

LONDON (ANA - V. Mourtis) - British Prime Minister John Major expressed support for referring the issue of the Imia islets in the eastern Aegean to the International Court at The Hague after meeting his Greek counterpart Costas Simitis yesterday.

"We believe this issue should be referred to the International Court," Mr. Major told a questioner.

Mr. Simitis expressed optimism that a solution will be found to the issue of Imia since, as he said, all conceded that in this event international law should be implemented and the issue should be led to a solution through the court at The Hague.

The two prime ministers held hour-long talks focusing on Greek-British relations, the situation in the Balkans and Greek-Turkish relations, as well as the Cyprus issue and Britain's "mad cow" problem. Both leaders said the meeting, also attended by Alternate Foreign Minister George Romeos, was held in a very good climate and ascertained that bilateral relations were exceptionally good. Both prime ministers spoke to reporters after the meeting despite earlier statements that no briefing was scheduled.

Summing up the results of his visit to London, Mr. Simitis said Greek positions met with a favourable response and that, on this basis, the two countries could have better cooperation.

However, Britain appeared to insist on its position in relating the accession of Cyprus to the European Union to a solution to the Cyprus problem, but

Mr. Simitis told a press conference he informed Mr. Major of disagreement by both the Greek and Cyprus

governments on this position.

Replying to a question on whether the British prime minister intended to undertake any initiatives on the Cyprus issue, Mr. Simitis said Britain was already playing an important role on the Cyprus question, adding that he believed Mr. Major would support every effort aimed at its resolution.

Greek-Turkish relations were also discussed by the two prime ministers and, according to Mr. Simitis, Mr. Major reiterated the position on a Greek-Turkish dialogue "on issues which have arisen."

Mr. Simitis rejected this position, stressing that such a dialogue would lead nowhere.

On the question of Turkey's customs union with the EU, Mr. Major said Greece should lift its reservations on the funding of Turkey.

Mr. Simitis said that for this to take place Turkey should abandon threats of the use of force, stating

this publicly, and resort to the International Court at The Hague on the Imia issue.

Britain and Greece had a different approach to the issue of revising the Maastricht Treaty. Mr. Simitis said Greece wanted a model based on a federal prospect while Britain preferred inter-governmental cooperation.

The two countries agreed on the principle of veto on foreign policy and defence issues, apart from issues concerning national sovereignty.

On the question of the British claim for reconsideration of the "mad cow" question, the Greek side agreed to Community scientists (including Greeks) re-examining data provided by British scientists.

Mr. Simitis told Mr. Major Greece's decision would be finalised primarily on the basis of consumer interests.

Meetings with Blair

Mr. Simitis also held a meeting earlier in the day with Labour leader Tony Blair and shadow foreign secretary Robin Cook which, he told reporters, focused on issues of bilateral issues as well as European Union issues.

The prime minister said he invited both Mr. Blair and Mr. Cook to visit Greece "in order to discuss the problems which concern our parties."

Mr. Blair's office later issued an announcement regarding the meeting saying it centred on centre and centre-left parties in Europe, European issues, the Balkans and the Cyprus problem.

The announcement said the British Labour Party unreservedly supported Cyprus's accession to the European Union.

Mr. Simitis leaves London for Ireland today for talks with Prime Minister John Bruton.

Heseltine hosts dinner

At the end of his visit to London, Mr. Simitis was invited to a dinner held at Lancaster House by British Deputy Prime Minister Michael Heseltine.

Alternate Foreign Minister George Romeos, government spokesman Dimitris Reppas, Ambassador Filon from the foreign ministry and Greek Ambassador to London Ilias Gounaris were also invited to the dinner.

Welcoming Mr. Simitis, Mr. Heseltine said he could foresee the future improvement in bilateral relations in all sectors, and added that the Greek prime minister's presence in London contributed in a positive way to this.

US hopes '96 to be year of progress in Cyprus problem, Kornblum says

ISTANBUL (ANA - A. Kourkoulas) - US Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs John Kornblum reiterated the desire of the US