

KATHIMERINI 12/12/02

Cyprus talks to go on at EU summit

Clerides gives Annan plan 'serious thought,' Denktash says no deal, Greece ready for all scenarios

The EU summit which begins in Copenhagen this afternoon is expected to lead to an invitation to 10 new members, including Cyprus, to accede to the 15-member Union. The meeting will shape the course of European history and will have a great effect on Cyprus, Turkey and Greece. But last night, few predictions could be made about its outcome.

Greek officials appeared confident yesterday that Cyprus will be invited to join the EU without any conditions, even as a UN-brokered deal to reunify the island appeared to be running out of time. But they were prepared for any eventuality.

"Cyprus will accede without any footnotes," Foreign Minister George Papandreou said, referring to the

fear of accession being conditional on an end to Cyprus's division.

The host of the summit, Denmark's PM Anders Fogh Rasmussen, said that UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan had asked his government for facilities to enable last-minute negotiations on Cyprus to continue in tandem with the summit.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the leader of Turkey's ruling party, said yesterday that hopes of resolving the Cyprus problem hinged on whether the EU summit would give his country a date for the start of membership talks in the coming year. Asked by the German newspaper Sueddeutsche Zeitung whether the EU's failure to grant Turkey a date by the end of 2003 would complicate the Cyprus problem, Erdogan replied,

"Yes. Clearly yes... After the decisions have been taken in Copenhagen, we will discuss them."

Despite strong pressure from the United States, including a telephone call from President George W. Bush to Rasmussen yesterday, the EU appeared more likely to follow a German-French proposal to offer Turkey a date in 2005, on condition that it meets the EU's criteria in 2004.

Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides and the leaders of six Greek-Cypriot parties arrived in Copenhagen yesterday. On Tuesday, Annan presented the Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot sides with a revised plan for Cyprus. "It would be easy to reject the plan, as some hotheads suggest," Clerides said before leaving Cyprus. "But I must give it very seri-

ous thought."

Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash is sending a representative, as he is to undergo medical checks in Ankara today. Yesterday, he told Turkey's NTV television that his side will not be able to sign the deal in Copenhagen.

"We have not reached the point of signing the plan," he said. "We need time to be able to discuss with the Greek-Cypriot side."

Prime Minister Costas Simitis left for Copenhagen yesterday after a meeting with his foreign policy aides in which they discussed five possible scenarios regarding Cyprus's invitation to join the EU. The first scenario (and best case) would be if the Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot sides agreed to a deal, in which case

the whole of Cyprus would accede to the EU. The other four scenarios revolve around there being no deal. The worst case here is that some EU members might try to tie Cyprus's accession to the solution of its division. In that case, Simitis is prepared to veto the whole EU enlargement process. The third scenario is if Cyprus is invited to join, without being couched in terms that would imply indirect recognition of the Turkish-occupied part of the island. A development in which the breakaway state was indirectly recognized would prompt a Greek veto. The fifth possible scenario envisages the invitation to all 10 candidates being delayed until next spring. Athens would not be happy but would not object strenuously.