

Turkish leader backs UN plan for Cyprus

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Reuters

effective power-sharing.

relations with Greece.

NICOSIA: A United Nations peace plan for Cyprus was bolstered Tuesday when the winner of the election in Turkey threw his weight behind efforts to reunify the island.

The blueprint announced by the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, would reunite Greek and Turkish communities segregated for 30 years, creating a Swiss-style government with broad and

The two sides of the divided Mediterranean island and their backers in Greece and Turkey said the plan announced Monday deserved close study and would not be rejected out of hand.

But the most powerful signal came from Recep Tayyip Erdogan, leader of the party set to form Turkey's next government, who said a solution to the division of Cyprus would help Turkey's own EU-membership ambitions and its

"No matter how much we say 'It's not related, they're not linked,' solving the Cyprus issue would not just accelerate the EU process but also be a concrete and useful step to overcoming many problems between Turkey and Greece," Erdogan was quoted as saying by the state-run Anatolian news agency.

Cyprus has been divided since Turkey invaded in 1974 in response to a Greek Cypriot coup backed by Athens.