
UN CHIEF WARNS NOT TO 'EXPECT MIRACLES' OVER CYPRUS

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The United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres says the talks in Geneva to resolve the division of the ethnically-divided island of Cyprus are close to a settlement but patience is needed. Swiss Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter also gave a cautious welcome to progress.

We are coming close to a settlement on Cyprus but obviously there is still some way to go, Guterres told reporters in Geneva on Thursday. Dont expect miracles.

Accompanied by Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci, Guterres said instruments were needed to implement an end to a conflict which has defied mediation for decades.

"Our goal here is to get the necessary results, and to do that we want to work seriously for the amount of time that is necessary," he said. "We are facing so many situations of disaster, we badly need a symbol of hope. I strongly believe Cyprus can be the symbol hope of the beginning of 2017."

Guterres said talks will reconvene on Thursday afternoon and go on as long as necessary.

The strategically located island in the eastern Mediterranean, a former British colony, was split after a Turkish invasion in 1974 triggered by a brief Greek-inspired coup.

For the first time in more than a decade, Greek and Turkish Cypriots plan to submit maps to the UN detailing their proposals on territorial boundaries between constituent states in a two-zone federation. The foreign ministers of Britain, Greece and Turkey also met in Geneva to thrash out a security deal for a reunited Cyprus.

Rapprochement

Swiss Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter was also present at the UN on Thursday and spoke to participants.

We see progress towards a peace solution, reconciliation and federalism, Burkhalter told the Swiss News Agency.

Burkhalter said he expected a rapprochement, which he said was already a great deal. He added that he was encouraged that the peace process had not been controlled from outside but said people should not get their hopes up too much.

The Swiss foreign minister went on to stress the islands historical link to Switzerland. The alpine nation has hosted Cyprus talks for decades. Negotiations in Zurich contributed to the islands independence in 1960. It was also the location for talks led by former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan at the start of the 2000s.

Burkhalter said it was important for the participants that the talks took place in a federal state like Switzerland which understood the idea of sharing power with local authorities.

The Swiss foreign minister met Guterres earlier on Thursday morning and held discussions on Cyprus, global conflict prevention issues, UN reform, the future development of International Geneva and the renovations to the UN Palais des Nations headquarters building, the ministry said in a statement.

It said Burkhalter also argued in favour of better harnessing the tremendous potential of International Geneva, particularly in terms of peace and security, human rights, humanitarian aid, migration and the implementation of the UN 2030 development agenda.

Kaynak/Source: