



Shadow Europe Minister, Mark Francois MP, last night told British Cypriot delegates at the Conservative Party's annual conference in Birmingham that Cyprus would be given priority by a Conservative administration after the next election.

Speaking at a fringe event organised jointly by Conservatives for Cyprus and Federation members DESY UK and the Greek Cypriot Brotherhood, Mr Francois welcomed the improved climate between the two communities on the island following the commencement of direct negotiations between the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Demetris Christofias, and Mr Mehmet Ali Talat, leader of the Turkish Cypriot community. Stressing that a resolution of the Cyprus problem was long overdue, Mr Francois said that it was important for Britain and the international community to respond in a positive way to the crucial effort currently under way and pledged that a Conservative government would give due emphasis to the issue.

The National Federation of Cypriots in the UK was represented at the event by its President, Mr Peter Droussiotis, who pointed out in his address that President Christofias was working extremely hard to bring about a negotiated just and lasting settlement which will reunite Cyprus and its people. He expressed the hope that Mr Talat will be able to reciprocate and that Turkey will not be an obstacle to a solution. Thanking Conservative parliamentarians for their support to Cyprus in the past, Peter also emphasised the need for all political friends of the Republic and the UK Cypriot community to redouble their efforts during what is a critical period for the future of the island. He said:

"The key to a solution continues to be in Ankara's hands and we, therefore, urge and expect all of our friends in the Conservative Party and beyond to do what they can to exert influence on Turkey so that this country finally embraces the need for a solution which will serve, above all else, the interests of Cyprus and the Cypriot people."

Peter's sentiments were echoed by Andreas Papaevripides, DYSY UK Chairman and Vice President of the Federation, and Tony Yerolemou, Chairman of Conservatives for Cyprus, who also spoke.

The fringe reception was attended by a number of parliamentarians including Shadow Transport Secretary Theresa Villiers MP (Chipping Barnet), Shadow Justice Minister David Burrowes MP (Enfield Southgate), Sir George Young Bt MP (NW Hampshire), Nigel Waterson MP (Eastbourne, Willingdon & East Dean), John Penrose MP (Weston-super-Mare), Charles

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Tannock MEP, Lord Taylor, as well as a number of Conservative councillors and activists including Cllrs Barbara Yerolemou and Marina Yannakoudakis. Also present at the event was Cyprus Deputy High Commissioner, Demetris Hatzargyrou.