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THE CYPRUS CENTER FOR EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS MARKS 25 YEARS OF CREATIVE PRESENCE AND FRUITFUL CONTRIBUTION

The record and the way forward

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The Cyprus Center for European and International Affairs is an independent, non-partisan, nonprofit making think-tank and research center affiliated with the University of Nicosia. Since its establishment in 1993 the Center has sought to advance academic and policy-oriented research and to contribute to the study and analysis of important economic, political and social issues revolving around Cyprus, the Eastern Mediterranean and the European Union.

This work has been advanced through the engagement in national, European and international research projects, the organization of international symposia, conferences, roundtable discussions, seminars, as well as the publication of books, policy-papers, conference papers and research reports.

Over time, the Center has built a wide network of associations and partnerships in Cyprus and abroad. The Center takes pride for the quality and scope of its academic research, which endowed it with a reputation and made it a point of reference by numerous regional and international think tanks, government agencies and mass media on several issues. These include the Cyprus problem, regional geopolitics, security, European affairs and the economy.

In addition to addressing regional, European and international themes, the success of the Center also depends on examining issues of special interest to the Republic of Cyprus. Having lived through turbulent decades in the 1960s and the 70s, having survived the Turkish invasion of 1974 and despite the *de facto* partition, the Republic of Cyprus managed to build a prosperous economy and enjoyed over thirty years of economic growth, peace and political stability, reaching such a level of development that earned it membership in the EU. This has been a remarkable success.

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Unfortunately, by 2013 Cyprus fell victim of its own success. Many years of uninterrupted economic growth bred complacency, irresponsibility and a culture of invincibility at most levels of Cypriot society. Without downplaying external factors, it is vital to assess the internal responsibilities for the failure, which left the Cypriot economy with high private and public debts and other serious problems.

These are difficult times as there are profound changes, unrest and widespread security challenges in the broader Middle East and across the planet. Undoubtedly, we are witnessing a transition to a new paradigm whose shape and nature have not yet been fully formed and understood. A major threat of historical transition periods, like the one we have entered, is that more often than not they may seriously affect those nation-states which fail to stand the test of times. They may also revive old bitter memories and uncover old wounds. The current crisis that we are witnessing in Cyprus and beyond is multidimensional: economic, political and social. It also revolves around the lack of a credible value system. Indeed, we have entered a new period where everything, from individual life to social norms and institutions, undergo serious changes.

In this new reality the Republic of Cyprus, which is a member of the EU and the Eurozone, finds itself at the crossroads of potentially cascading crises. Cyprus is located in the Eastern Mediterranean and near the broader Middle East. It has a predominantly hellenic identity and special relations with Greece. About 37% of its territory is occupied by Turkey, one of the most powerful states in the region. Furthermore, in addition to the British bases on the island, Cyprus shares deep social and economic ties with the United Kingdom despite a bitter historical past. At the same time, it has a strong economic, political and cultural relationship with Russia. Such a precarious geopolitical position coupled with the need to adopt a new economic model requires high-caliber strategic thinking and policy implementation.

New realities demand new approaches. The Cyprus Center for European and International Affairs aspires to enhance initiatives to create a new open environment for a societal dialogue on the most pressing matters and risks we face as a state. We envision an open intellectual platform, which will bring together the brightest minds of our country, who will collectively develop a new vision for Cyprus. At the same time we aspire to make a modest contribution to broader pressing issues of the region and of the EU.

The Center wishes to share the results of the multidisciplinary research and help participants from government, the business community, academia, media and civil society in order to come up with viable strategies, policies and suggestions for effectively addressing important issues. At the same time, the Republic of Cyprus must work and position itself in ways that it is perceived as an asset for the EU and the international community.