

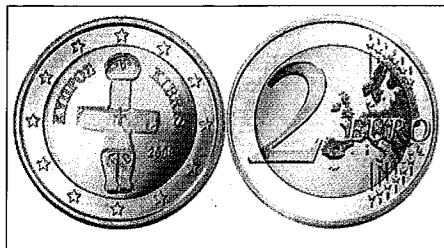
Notes & News

●The **State Literary Awards** for publications in 2008 were announced by the Ministry of Education and Culture on 6 January. The poetry award went to George Moraris for his work "Rosmarinos". Stephanos Stavrides won the short story award for "The Library of Ravel". The essay/study award went to Eleni Nikita for "Christoforos Savva: The Beginning of a New Era in Cypriot Art". Ozay and Selcuk Akif took the chronicle/testimony award for "Echo Since Old Times: the Turkish Cypriot Community of Limassol and its Heritage". The writer's award for beginners was won jointly by Titsa Diamadopoulou for her collection of short stories "A Dirty Dress" and Christos Argyrou for his poetry collection "Diving in Time".

●Important findings at the **Katalymmata ton Plakoton archaeological site** on the Akrotiri peninsula during the third season of excavations in October-November 2009 were announced by the Antiquities Department on 11 January. They included part of an early Christian church of the late 6th or early 7th century AD, which was destroyed in a mid-7th century earthquake. Expert analysis established that the building was the work of highly skilled builders from Cyprus or the Byzantine Empire. In a further report on 14 January, the Antiquities Department said that the 2009 season of excavations at the **Ayia Varvara-Asprokremnos site** had unearthed the earliest known structure belonging to the Neolithic period, dating back to the 9th millennium BC.

●The **continuation of water rationing** was confirmed by Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment Minister Michalis Polynikis on 13 January, despite heavy rainfall in the latter part of 2009 which increased reservoir contents to a third of capacity. Rationing for households was lifted over the holiday period, but an assessment of the post-holiday situation concluded that the 15 per cent cut in supply imposed last summer should be maintained. Mr Polynikis remained confident, however, that Cyprus will cease to be reliant on rainfall from 2011 as new desalination plants come on stream.

●The **two euro coin of Cyprus** has won first prize in an international "best coin" competition run by Krause Publications, the US publisher of "World Coin News". The prize was presented on 30 January at a special ceremony at the World Money Fair in Berlin. According to the judges, the coin possesses all-round appeal from both the aesthetic and the commercial viewpoint and best meets the requirements of circulation as a monetary unit. The "national side" of the coin, featuring the cross-shaped Pomos idol (picrolite) representing culture, was designed in a competition organised by the Central Bank of Cyprus by Tatiana Sotiropoulou and Erik Maell.



●Winning coin... The two sides of Cyprus' two-euro piece.

●An intensive action programme for the **Social Road Safety Alliance** will be drafted by the Government in an effort to curb road traffic accidents, pledged President Christofias on 14 January. Speaking during the signing at the Presidential Palace of the European Road Safety Charter by 21 Cypriot organisations, the President said that the main responsibility for combating "the plague" of road accidents rested with the Government, but that the "active and substantial contribution of the citizens is integral to the effectiveness of the state's efforts". He noted that over the last decade no less than 947 persons lost their lives in road accidents in Cyprus and many thousands were injured.

●The renovated and expanded **Leventis Municipal Museum** in Nicosia's Old City was formally opened by President Christofias on 9



●Handsome portal... The entrance to the Leventis Municipal Museum in the Old City of Nicosia.

January. Winner of the European Museum of the Year award in 1991, only two years after its opening, the museum is one of the cultural gems of Cyprus. Now, after a €5 million refurbishment, it has digital technology to provide visitors with a virtual tour of Nicosia through the centuries. President Christofias praised the educational role of the museum, noting that it "advertises the history and the cultural heritage of the last divided capital in Europe, and of Cyprus in general".

●Presenting the annual awards of the **Cyprus Theatre Organisation (THOK)** in Nicosia on 18 January, President Christofias praised the talent, professionalism and social involvement of the Cypriot theatre world and looked forward to the completion of a new state theatre building in 2011. Actor Stelios Kafkarides was awarded the grand prize for theatre and other awards were made as follows: Stavros Louras (best performance), Stella Fyrogeni (best actress), Despina Bebedeli (best director), Maria Marmara (best script adaptation), Elena Katsouri (best setting), Lakis Genethlis (best costume design), Giorgos Kolias (best music), Liza Tsagaridou and Elena Hadjidaki (best dance/movement), Miroslav Zdravkov (best lighting design) and THOK (best children's production).

●The new **Paphos International Airport** was given a feather in its cap on 7 January by the announcement that it had come top among the main European airports for the standard of its services in a survey of passengers flying last summer with UK tour operator Thompson Airways. Welcoming the verdict, the Cyprus Tourism Organisation said that the effective operation of airports plays an important role in the promotion of the tourist industry.

●An indication of the Nicosia area's distant watery past has been given by the recent discovery of **prehistoric whale fossils** in six different parts of the capital by amateur palaeontologists George and Fani Constantinou together with Environment Services director Antonis Antoniou. The fossils are believed to be between one and two million years old and include the ribs and spine of whales estimated to have been 20 metres long, living at a time when present-day Cyprus was below sea level. □

Sporting highlights in January 2010

Tennis. Cypriot star Marcos Baghdatis took his fourth Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) title on 16 January, winning the Medibank International tournament in Sydney, Australia. Boosted by vocal support from local Greek Cypriots, he defeated Richard Gasquet of France in two straight sets, 6-4 and 7-6. It was announced after the match that Baghdatis, who is now 31st in the ATP world rankings, would donate \$5,000 of his \$67,260 winner's cheque to the Haiti earthquake disaster appeal. On 23 January Baghdatis was sadly forced to retire injured from his third round match against Lleyton Hewitt in the Australian Open.

Sports writers' awards. High-jumper Kyriakos Ioannou and sprinter Eleni Artymata won the top 2009 awards of the Cyprus Union of Sports Writers, presented by President Demetris Christofias at a ceremony in Nicosia on 14 January. National record holder Ioannou won the silver medal at the athletics World Championships in Berlin

in August 2009, whilst Artymata, also the national record holder, became the first Cypriot woman to reach the final of the 200 metres.

APOEL football club of Nicosia, which reached the group stage of the European Champions League in 2009, won the team of the year award. Also honoured was the Cyprus Olympic Committee chaired by Ouranios Ioannides, for its hosting of the 13th Games of the Small States of Europe in June. □

CYPRUS NEWS is produced monthly by the Cyprus High Commission. To receive a regular copy, by post or email, please contact: The Press Counsellor, Cyprus High Commission, 13 St James's Square, London, SW1Y 4LB tel: 020 7321 4100, fax: 020 7321 4164/5, email: presscounsellor@chclondon.org.uk

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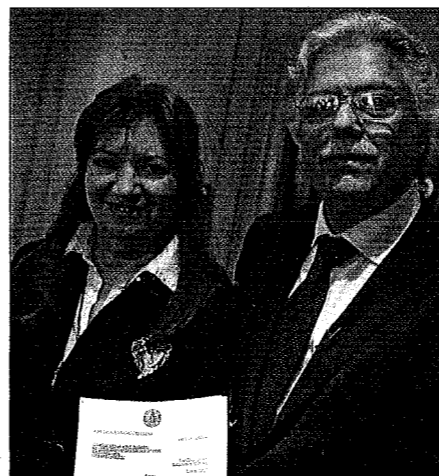
LONDON EDITION



Issue No. 244

January 2010

Landmark property ruling in London



●Mr Apostolidis and his wife show the London decision.

The Cyprus Government hailed a landmark ruling by the Court of Appeal in London on 19 January that judgments by the courts of the Republic of Cyprus about a Greek Cypriot-owned property in the Turkish-occupied area of Cyprus can be executed in other EU member states. The ruling followed a decision by the European Court of Justice in April upholding the competency of courts of the Republic of Cyprus to rule on property rights in the Turkish-occupied area even though such rulings could not be enforced in present circumstances.

The London ruling meant that UK couple Linda and David Orams were deemed to have illegally acquired a property in Lapithos, near Kyrenia, which is in fact owned by Greek Cypriot Meletis Apostolidis, who had been displaced by the Turkish invasion in 1974. It therefore confirmed Cypriot court rulings dating from November 2004 that the couple must demolish the holiday home they had built on Mr Apostolidis' land, including a swimming pool and perimeter wall, return the property to him and pay him rent of €500 a month as well as legal costs.

Mr Apostolidis' lawyer, Constantis Cantounas, said that the ruling of the London court in favour of his client "has determined in a final way that the legal rights of displaced Cypriots against trespassers, as determined by the courts of the Republic of Cyprus, can be enforced in the UK". He said that the ruling would act as a deterrent against speculation in stolen properties in the Turkish-occupied

area, where some 5,000 non-Cypriots, mostly Britons, have bought property.

Asked whether Mr Apostolidis would seek a court order against the Oramses' assets in Britain to obtain execution of the Cypriot court award, Mr Cantounas said that it was necessary to wait and see whether they complied with the award of the Cypriot courts. At a press conference on 21 January, he declared that "the party is over" for those who had illegally acquired Greek Cypriot properties in the Turkish-occupied area. On 29 January the Oramses were refused leave to appeal against the ruling to the new UK Supreme Court.

The reaction to the London ruling among expatriate "owners" of properties in the occupied area was reported to be one of alarm that an important precedent had been set for many more property suits: by dispossessed Greek Cypriots. As regards Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot "authorities", the reaction was one of defiance and churlishness, featuring assertions that there would be no co-operation in implementing the decision and claims that the Greek Cypriots are exploiting membership of the EU to damage the peace process.

The London decision was described by President Demetris Christofias as legally important because it flowed from EU and other European law and as politically important because it had sent a message to the side seeking to deny the right to ownership and use of property. Government Spokesman Stephanos Stephanou commented on 20 January that the ruling arms the Greek Cypriots "to pursue the rights of property owners and a solution to their problems on the basis of principles", first and foremost that properties belong to the legal owners. Asked whether the Government would urge owners of property in the Turkish-occupied areas to follow Mr Apostolidis' legal path, Mr Stephanou replied that the issues involved should be dealt with cautiously and carefully.

Cyprus Foreign Minister Markos Kyprianou declared on 21 January that the London ruling "binds all EU member states and citizens" and sends a message that the law of the Republic of Cyprus applies in the occupied areas. He also dismissed the Turkish Government's reaction that the ruling would complicate the Cyprus settlement talks, asserting that it "reaffirms the legitimacy of the positions presented by our side". □

Intensification of settlement talks

The arrival of UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon in Nicosia late on 31 January for meetings with Cypriot leaders served to focus international attention on the state of his good offices mission on the Cyprus problem. Negotiations on a Cyprus settlement between President Demetris Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat had been intensified in January, as agreed at their meeting on 21 December (see CN 12/2009).

Following a meeting on 4 January, President Christofias and Mr Talat had three further sessions on 11, 12 and 13 January, principally devoted to issues of governance and power-sharing, and then four more on 25, 26, 27 and 29 January. These brought the number of meetings since the second phase of the talks began in September 2009 to 21 and the number since the process started in September 2008 to 61.

Some hopes of progress were raised by the submission by the Turkish Cypriot side, via the UN Secretary General's Special Adviser on Cyprus, Alexander Downer, of proposals on governance and power-sharing, but these were quickly dashed. Cyprus Government Spokesman Stephanos Stephanou said on 14 January that the Turkish Cypriot document departed from previously agreed principles and so was not a basis for negotiations.

A paper on governance and power-sharing was submitted to the talks by President Christofias, who on 15 January discussed it with the National Council, the senior advisory body on the Cyprus problem, consisting of parliamentary party leaders and senior ministers. On 20 January the President wrote to the UN Security Council members and to EU member states explaining why the Turkish Cypriot proposals were unacceptable.

After the talks on 29 January, Mr Downer declared that the two leaders had made "significant" progress on governance issues and had left the meeting "feeling positive". He added that they would have more to say after they had met Ban Ki Moon.

●It was announced in Washington on 24 January that President Barack Obama would appoint a personal envoy on the Cyprus problem. President Christofias welcomed the decision "provided that US policy will respect the Republic of Cyprus and contribute to a just and viable settlement". □

Inside Measures for tourist industry • Artemida village inaugurated • New bicomunal peace movement • Haiti relief efforts • Smoking ban in force • Van Rompuy in Nicosia • Vassiliou hearing • EU's 2020 Strategy • Labour market outlook

Ban on smoking

A ban on smoking in all closed public places came into force on 1 January, as approved by the House of Representatives in July 2009. Under the new law, smoking is now only allowed in open and outside areas. Transgressors, whether smokers or owners of premises not applying the ban, will be liable to fines of up to €2,000, whilst property owners who do not display "no smoking" signs can be fined up to €1,000.

Heralding a new era in Cyprus as regards the discouragement of smoking, Health Minister Christos Patsalides described the ban as "a gift for the citizens". He said that the aim was to create a safe environment for vulnerable groups of the population and to encourage smokers to give up the habit. □

Intensification of work on missing

The tripartite UN-sponsored Committee on Missing Persons (CMP) on 18 January announced an intensification in 2010 of its programme of exhumation, identification and return of the remains of persons listed as missing since the 1974 invasion and from the 1963-67 period. This will involve six exhumation teams operating in the Turkish-occupied northern part of Cyprus and two in the Government-controlled areas.

The CMP reported that since the launch of its project in August 2006, it has retrieved the remains of more than 600 persons. Those of 145 Greek Cypriot missing persons and 51 Turkish Cypriots - 196 in total - have been identified and returned to families for formal burial. Thus the families of over 1,700 missing Cypriots from both communities are still waiting to learn the fate of their loved ones.

Formal identification of exhumed remains by DNA testing takes place at the bicomunal laboratory of the Cyprus Institute of Neurology and Genetics (CING) located in the UN buffer zone in Nicosia. □

Employment warning

A warning that 2010 is likely to be a difficult year for employment was given on 6 January by Labour and Social Insurance Minister Sotiroula Charalambous.

Mrs Charalambous noted that a slight decline in unemployment in December (see below) was "a positive development", whilst asserting that "we must not become complacent and come to the conclusion that the problem has been overcome". She said that her Ministry and the National Employment Committee will continue to monitor the employment sector very closely to help support businesses and to minimise the need to lay off staff.

●Statistical Service figures issued on 6 January showed that the average number of registered unemployed in Cyprus in 2009 was 17,505, a rise of 52 per cent on the 2008 average of 11,541. The seasonally adjusted jobless figure for December was 19,745, a sharp increase compared with December 2008 but 2.8 per cent fewer than in November. □

Hope of tourism revival in 2010

Statistical Service figures issued on 13 January showed that the number of tourist arrivals in Cyprus in 2009 decreased by 10.9 per cent compared with 2008 - the biggest year-on-year fall since 1991 but not as great as had once been feared by industry leaders. There was hope that the decline could be reversed in 2010, especially since the general end of the international recession impelled the World Tourism Organisation to predict that global tourism numbers will increase by 3-4 per cent in 2010.

Cautious optimism about prospects in 2010 was expressed on 26 January by Commerce, Industry and Tourism Minister Antonis Paschalides, who said that the signs are both encouraging and presaging



•Winter walking... Trails in the beautiful Akamas peninsula are ideal for out-of-season tourists.

difficulties. Addressing the 2010 Cyprus Tourism Forum in Nicosia, Mr Paschalides said that "bearing in mind that tourism is one of the fundamental pillars of the Cyprus economy, it is essential for an intense and collective effort to take place to get the best possible results".

At the same gathering, Finance Minister Charilaos Stavrakis warned that "there are no easy solutions" to the decline in tourism. Noting the relative inability of Cyprus to attract visitors with high incomes and high purchasing power, he called for a focus on medium-term strategy to improve the tourist product rather than temporary measures.

In the context of the aim of developing winter tourism to redress the traditional seasonality of "sun, sea and sand holidays", Cyprus Tourism Organisation (CTO) chairman Alecos Orountiotis stressed on 6 January that the CTO "is implementing specific and targeted plans for winter tourism in its broader efforts to solve the problem of seasonality". He added that advertising campaigns by the CTO are directed at attracting out-of-season visitors to Cyprus.

Tourist arrivals in Cyprus in December of 66,201 (compared with 72,127 in the same month in 2008) brought total arrivals in 2009 to 2,141,193, as against 2,403,750 in 2008. The biggest national fall was in holiday-makers from Britain, which nevertheless remained substantially the largest source of visitors to Cyprus. Revenue from tourism amounted to €1,493 million in 2009, 16.7 per cent down on receipts in 2008. □

Reconstructed Greek village inaugurated

President Demetris Christofias on 17 January inaugurated the reconstructed village of Artemida in the southern Peloponnese in Greece, which had been devastated in the forest fires of mid-2007 with the loss of the lives of 20 local inhabitants. The €14 million cost of the reconstruction of 77 homes and properties had been met by the Cyprus

Government as an act of solidarity by the Cypriot people.

Those with President Christofias included Greek Premier George Papandreou, who joined with the Cypriot leader in unveiling a plaque commemorating Cyprus' contribution. It was located in the central area of Artemida, which was re-named "Cyprus Square". □

Formation of bicomunal peace movement

The United Cyprus Peace Initiative (UCPI) was launched on 13 January as an inter-communal initiative supportive of efforts to find a solution to the Cyprus problem through the ongoing negotiating process and opposed to acts of extreme nationalism. The joint chairmen of the UCPI are Themis Demetriou and Sener Elcil, representing between them 35 non-governmental organisations in the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities.

Mr Demetriou said that he and Mr Elcil believe that progress has been made in the Nicosia settlement negotiations (see page 1) but that it has been much too slow and much too fragile. He therefore called for speedier progress and pledged to mobilise more people in support of a settlement, adding that there will be no good future for either Greek Cypriots or Turkish Cypriots unless the Cyprus problem is resolved.

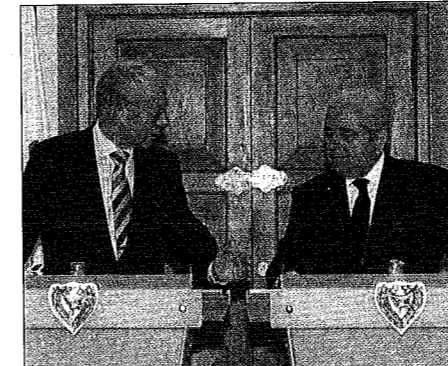
The five principles on which the initiative is based are: 1. support for enduring peace and stability and for the creation of a bizonal, bicomunal United Federal Republic; 2. the need for urgent action on property and population issues to prevent them from impeding a settlement; 3. full information for both communities about the negotiations; 4. collaboration between the two communities in the social, cultural, economic and political spheres; and 5. opposition to "separatist, fascist and racist forces".

●To mark the conclusion of the second intensive round of the settlement talks in Nicosia, the UCPI approved a resolution calling on the two leaders to proceed "courageously, decisively and immediately to a compromise solution on the basis of agreed principles. The resolution described such a compromise as "the only moral choice or our epoch". □

Herman Van Rompuy visits Cyprus

A pledge that the EU stands ready to provide all the advice and support possible for the achievement of a Cyprus settlement was given by European Council President Herman Van Rompuy in talks with President Demetris Christofias in Nicosia on 21 January. Having been appointed to the EU post in November 2009, Mr Van Rompuy was on an introductory tour of EU capitals, in view of an informal EU summit to be held in Brussels in February.

Speaking after a working lunch with Mr Van Rompuy, President Christofias reported that he had briefed him on the negotiations in progress in Nicosia and on the latest proposals submitted by the Turkish Cypriot side (see page



•Herman Van Rompuy with President Christofias in Nicosia.

1). In this context, he asked him to support the Republic of Cyprus in its efforts to reach an agreement on the basis of a bicomunal, bizonal federation with political equality and a single sovereignty as specified in UN Security Council resolutions.

Mr Rompuy said that a settlement of the Cyprus problem is important for the EU, since "it is about ending divisions in Europe and about stability in the region". He commended the leaders of the two Cypriot communities "for the framework they have established in the talks and for their courageous efforts and strong and unabated commitment to work towards a solution".

High on the agenda of the meeting was the tackling of the economic crisis, the EU's response to climate change, the EU's 2020 Strategy (see below) and the issue of illegal immigration.

●Cyprus is up to date in its preparations for its first occupancy of the EU Presidency in the second half of 2012, said the Head of the Cyprus EU Presidency Office Andreas Moleskis on 12 January. As regards infrastructure, the next step is the preparation of the buildings/installations which will host delegates and the media during meetings to be held in Cyprus. Under the Lisbon Treaty, the established system of a rotating EU Presidency held by member states for six months continues in parallel to the appointment of Mr Van Rompuy as President of the European Council. □

EU on track to formulate 2020 Strategy

Speaking after meeting representatives of the political parties and the social partners on 15 January to discuss the latest European Commission (EC) proposals on the 2020 Strategy aiming to make the EU the world's most competitive economic area, Finance Minister Charilaos Stavrakis said that he was launching a public dialogue, co-ordinated by the Planning Bureau, "to hear the positions of the parties and the social partners and to the greatest extent possible to find common denominators with a view to sending a response to the EC with the greatest possible consent, to the benefit of the Cypriot economy and society". He stressed that "in general terms" the Cyprus Government agreed with the content of the EC paper.

The EC document had three themes, the first being a knowledge-based economy. Mr Stavrakis said that the key for Cyprus "is how to depend more on practical research and research that can produce immediate positive results for the economy, rather than on theoretical research". The second theme was the need for a social dimension to a new economy and the third the development of

a green economy. Mr Stavrakis said that in both areas the Government had presented comprehensive proposals.

Mr Stavrakis expressed confidence that, notwithstanding its exposure to the global financial crisis, Cyprus would maintain its economic growth rate advantage over the rest of the EU. He said that the challenge now was to solve the structural and fiscal problems of the Cypriot economy in order to maintain this advantage. He added that Cyprus' normative rate of annual GDP growth had been 4 per cent in recent years, which had been reduced to 3-3.5 per cent by the financial crisis. The comparable rates for the EU economy as a whole, he noted, were 2 per cent and 1-1.5 per cent.

●The Eurostat statistical office on 8 January revised its figure for the contraction in Cyprus' GDP in the third quarter of 2009 from 1.4 to 0.6 per cent, whilst the annual rate of shrinkage was revised from 2.7 to 2 per cent. In the 16-member euro zone, Greece and Spain also contracted in the third quarter, whereas the zone as a whole expanded by 0.3 per cent and the 27-member EU as a whole by 0.4 per cent. □

Eurostat survey of poverty rankings in 2008

According to a Eurostat survey published on 18 January, around 16 per cent of Cypriots had an income in 2008 which, after social transfers, put them below the poverty threshold and at risk of poverty as defined by the EU. For the 27-member EU as a whole, the at-risk-of-poverty rate was 17 per cent.

The highest at-risk-of-poverty rates in

2008 were found in Latvia (26 per cent), Romania (23 per cent), Bulgaria (23 per cent), Greece, Spain and Lithuania (all 20 per cent). The lowest were in the Czech Republic (9 per cent), the Netherlands and Slovakia (both 11 per cent) and Denmark, Hungary, Austria, Slovenia and Sweden (all 12 per cent). □

Vassiliou to continue as EU Commissioner

The EU Commissioner-designate from Cyprus, Androulla Vassiliou, gave what was generally regarded as an impressive performance at a three-hour hearing before the European Parliament (EP) on 14 January. Having held the Health portfolio since 2008, Mrs Vassiliou has been given the more variegated role of Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth Commissioner in the new Commission, which is expected to receive the EP's formal endorsement on 9 February.

Mrs Vassiliou stressed that "we should make sure that every EU programme we apply has a direct impact on citizens' lives", stating that her key priorities included strengthening education provision in the EU, increasing social mobility for young people and promoting culture and creativity. She also called for more resources for the training of teachers.

●The Commissioner-designate for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, Stefan Fule (Czech Republic), told the EP on 12 January that Turkey, if it wishes its EU membership candidacy to advance, must implement the Ankara Protocol providing for the opening of Turkish ports and airports to traffic from Cyprus. □



•Parliament hearing... Mrs Vassiliou before Euro-MPs.

Relief aid for Haiti

A donation of €100,000 to the international emergency relief fund for the victims of the devastating earthquake in Haiti was announced by the Cyprus Government on 15 January. The overall emergency relief contribution of EU member states is estimated at €92 million. In addition, the European Commission has made a preliminary commitment of €30 million in emergency aid to Haiti, while the response of the EU in humanitarian and rehabilitation aid in the medium to long term is estimated at €200 million.

President Demetris Christofias wrote to his Haitian counterpart, President Rene Preval, expressing the sympathy and solidarity of the Cypriot people for the suffering of the Haitian people. In addition to the Government's donation, fund-raising for the relief effort in Haiti was launched by the Church of Cyprus and by other bodies. □