

Shaping the future

By HE DEMETRIS CHRISTOFIAS

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS



DEMETRIS CHRISTOFIAS was inaugurated President of the Republic of Cyprus on 28 February 2008. He was been President of the House of Representatives since 2001 and a member since 1991, standing as an AKEL-Left-New Forces candidate. In 1988 he was elected General Secretary of the Central Committee of AKEL, a post to which he was re-elected four more times. He holds a Doctorate of Philosophy in History from the Institute of Social Sciences in Moscow (Academy of Social Sciences of the Soviet Union).

The 26th April 2009 marked the 60th anniversary of the London Declaration, which gave birth to the modern Commonwealth. There is no doubt that the world today is very different than it was when the Commonwealth was founded. Humanity faces common problems but it also has common perspectives. Today, the political, social and economic situation demands multiple action and cooperation. Every initiative which promotes collective action to face the problems and the challenges of humanity must be encouraged and supported. Nowadays, economic and political interdependence among all actors is an essential feature of the way our world works.

At the epicentre of our common concern are some of the most demanding issues of our times, climate change, the economic crisis, agriculture, tourism policy as well as policies for many other issues.

There are no isolated problems and no isolated solutions. This is why one of the biggest challenges of today, that is the economic recession, is not an issue that can be faced by any individual country by itself but, rather, it requires coordinated worldwide actions. The consequences spreading today to every part of the world underline the pressing need for enhanced supervision of the banking and financial sectors and mechanisms that would guarantee that such anarchy will never emerge again.

These consequences underline the need, in the framework of formulating and implementing the socio-economic policy, to take into consideration the wellbeing of the people and societies and not only the "wellbeing of numbers". It is imperative that we all reflect on how we can achieve better distribution of the wealth produced in order to bridge the gap that divides the wealthy from the poor countries.

The current economic crisis could develop into a golden opportunity to reform our economies, taking into consideration specific ecological standards. The goal is to achieve sustainable financial development, in other words green development, for the entire world. By promoting cooperation and mutual understanding between Member States, the Commonwealth could underline the need for common environmental action. As the degradation of the environment reaches a critical point, it seems that time's also running out. The results of the climatic changes are visible in most parts of the world.

This is one reason why we should concentrate our efforts on promoting sustainable development for our planet. The Commonwealth is an international forum which facilitates and promotes dialogue on a wide range of topics and due to this reason it can play an even more supportive role in these efforts. Let us not forget that the Commonwealth is a firm supporter of fundamental political freedoms and human rights. At the same time, political authorities should continue their efforts to fight against social inequalities, injustice and isolation.

The Commonwealth has been involved with the Cyprus problem since August 1964, following the intercommunal clashes at the end of 1963 and the deployment of the UN peacekeeping force in Cyprus. After the Turkish invasion in 1974, the Commonwealth held a principled position and expressly stated its solidarity to Cyprus in its Final Communiqué at CHOGM in Jamaica in 1975. Since then a statement on Cyprus has been included in every CHOGM Final Communiqué in support of the continuing efforts to reach a settlement to the Cyprus problem, in line with the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and the principles of the UN Charter and the Commonwealth.

We take it for granted that the Commonwealth will continue to express its solidarity towards Cyprus and will continue to support the efforts for finding a solution to the Cyprus problem. A solution that will lead to the restoration of the human rights and the basic freedoms of the people of Cyprus, will abolish the de facto division and will reunify the territory, the people, the institutions and the economy of Cyprus.

The mechanisms of soft power are essential in our world. It is clear that nothing can be achieved by force. The Commonwealth, as a soft power actor, supports all efforts for a peaceful settlement of all disputes and conflicts. The demand for global solidarity, however, still remains. The fact that, at least in most cases, countries from all over the world exchange views and negotiate, instead of using force to fulfil their ambitions, is a positive feature of our post-war world. Who could have ever envisaged a century ago that people from Europe, Asia and Africa would sit around the same table to discuss matters? Since 1949 and the London Declaration, much has changed. Yet, the need for understanding, effective cooperation and respect is still indispensable. The Commonwealth can contribute to the best of its abilities and within the framework of its role, to achieve this goal.