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Mr GHALANOS (Cyprus). - As the new President of the Cyprus House of Representatives, and thus the new representative of Cyprus at the Council of Europe, let me take this opportunity to greet all my colleagues from the countries and groups that compose the Council, and to express the hope that in future we shall co-operate closely to achieve a better and more equitable world and, in particular, a European order.

The subject that we are discussing is of paramount importance to Cyprus, and I have nothing but praise for the balanced and positive report prepared by Mr Soares Costa. I trust, however, that I shall be allowed to highlight certain paragraphs, and to give the background to some of the recommendations - without in any way disagreeing with the text as a whole, which, as I have said, I consider positive and balanced.

Our government strongly supports the good offices and efforts of United Nations Secretary-General ~~Raouf de Cuellar~~ and his representatives in Cyprus to convene an international conference on the problem of Cyprus, in which all interested parties will participate, together with the permanent members of the Security Council.

Although at the beginning of September hopes were running high that such a conference would take place, by the end of the month those hopes had been quashed. That happened during the Paris meeting between the Greek Prime Minister, Mr Mitsotakis, and the Prime Minister of Turkey, Mr Yilmaz, as the latter reneged on assurances given to United Nations representatives during talks in Ankara that his side was ready to make concessions - particularly in agreeing to the implementation of the basic freedoms of the Cypriot people, with specific emphasis on the inalienable right of the refugees to return to their homes and properties in conditions of safety, and the withdrawal of the Turkish troops who have occupied northern Cyprus since 1974. The reason given for that diplomatic flop was the imminence of parliamentary elections in Turkey. If that is the reason, however, why did Mr Yilmaz give false signals before the elections that he was ready to move?

Although we do not wish to write off the prospects of a change in the Turkish position, we wish, with all due respect, to remind our friends in the Assembly that, despite the absence of a single reference to the role of Turkey in the reports and other documents of the Council of Europe, the irrefutable truth remains that the problem of Cyprus is a problem of invasion, occupation and the violation of human rights. It is a problem of action against a small, peace-loving member state of the Council of Europe by a much bigger state, also a member of that organisation. That is a violation of many of the principles and resolutions that govern our institution here, but it is also a violation of the rule of law, the charter of the United Nations and the European code of behaviour relating to states and, in particular, democracies. It also contravenes numerous United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and decisions.

The fact that Turkey is a large country, and a large and important member of the Council of Europe, should not act as a deterrent to the application of universal and indivisible principles just because Cyprus is a smaller member state with less influence and power. (The implementation) of human rights and the rule of law cannot be measured according to the size or the influence of the country concerned. Unfortunately - again, with all due respect - it is an open secret that the country that feels squeezed in certain quarters is the victim of the aggression, not the aggressor.

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A question of credibility is involved; but it should also be recognised that, in the face of the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General, it is time for the Council of Europe to exert all its influence in the right direction, so that peace and justice ensue in the island of Cyprus - that sensitive area of the Mediterranean - for the sake of all the people and communities of our island, but also for the sake of peace and security in our part of the world. Atmospheric are important, but much more important is the implementation of the rule of law, so that the two communities can live together without the presence of occupying troops. In that respect, I fully endorse the recommendation of the report concerning the convening, and the aims, of a Conference on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean. I also fully agree with the references to a peace conference to resolve the Palestinian problem and the other conflicts and differences between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

I stress that Cyprus, as a member of the family of the Council of Europe and, more generally, of the European family, expects your full attention and support at this crucial stage when the United Nations Secretary-General is making an all-out effort to bring to an end the long tragedy of the island of Cyprus and its people.