

STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO CYPRUS

FRANK C. URBANCIC, JR.

SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

April 8, 2008

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to be with you here today. It is my great honor to be nominated by President Bush to serve as the next Ambassador of the United States to the Republic of Cyprus, and, if confirmed, I will do everything in my power to justify that trust, as well as that of Secretary Rice in sending forward my nomination.

At the outset I would note my intention to heed an admonishment of the ancient Stoic philosopher from Cyprus, Zeno of Kition, who said, “*The reason we have two ears but only one mouth, is that we may learn more and speak less.*”<sup>1</sup> I will keep my comments brief. May I also say that I am honored to be supported here today by my wife and lifetime partner Michelle, our two children, Frank and Arlette, and my parents visiting us from Indiana.

Mr. Chairman, I have spent 27 years in the Foreign Service, deepening my understanding of issues in the basin of the east Mediterranean and the risks that its people face. I have a deep and abiding interest in Cyprus, its people, and the politics and history of the region. I served at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations during the first Gulf War, and in addition, I was Senior Adviser in that Mission for Eastern European Affairs after my return to the United States from the second Gulf war. From those experiences, I

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<sup>1</sup> (Ζήνων ὁ Κιτιεύς, modern Larnaca, Fourth Century, B.C.), as related by *Diogenes Laertius* (Διογένης Λαέρτιος), Lives of Eminent Philosophers, *Life of Zeno*, XIX

have a keen awareness of the role of the United Nations in Cyprus and the role that multilateral diplomacy can play in bridging deep political divides.

In graduate school, I specialized in Byzantine studies, with a particular interest in Orthodox Church history. Because of that study, as well as my work in the region, I have come to understand the unique position that Cyprus has always held throughout its history. Cyprus has long played a role as a multicultural crossroad of history and civilization, and this remains true today. There was a time when I could translate Aristotle, and my time in Istanbul has also given me the opportunity to speak another great language of this region. I intend to use this familiarity with the languages of both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities to support efforts to reunite the country into a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation. Reunification of Cyprus under these long-agreed principles will allow its communities to realize the full potential that history has long foreseen for this beautiful and historically rich island.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with all members of the committee. Your views are important to me, and I would like to work closely with you to deepen the U.S.-Cypriot relationship, building upon the work of my predecessors.

The United States and Cyprus have many shared interests and ties. I was pleased to learn that more than 3,000 Cypriots have studied in the United States under U.S. Government-sponsored academic exchange programs, including the Fulbright Program -- one of the largest if not the largest per capita rate in the world. Cyprus was the first EU country to sign a ship boarding agreement with us under the Proliferation Security Initiative—a significant provision given that Cyprus has the eleventh largest merchant fleet in the world. Our countries are working together to safeguard Cypriot cultural

heritage, prevent pillaging and stop the illegal trafficking and sale of antiquities. I also expect that the nearly 15,000 American citizens who transited Cyprus in the summer of 2006, as they were evacuated from Lebanon, will long remember the generosity and gracious reception they were given by the Cypriot people. I look forward to seeking new opportunities to expand our partnerships and further our mutual understanding.

If confirmed, I realize I will be accredited to one government, that of the Republic of Cyprus. The United States does not recognize any other state on the island. That said, we need to engage the Turkish Cypriot community. We need to help them prepare for reunification by strengthening their NGOs and reducing economic disparities across the island. We also need to urge them to combat money laundering and counter possible terrorist threats. For all our programs, I will ensure U.S. assistance continues to support one overarching aim: reconciliation and reunification.

If confirmed, I will pursue one the Administration's policy priorities: a comprehensive Cyprus settlement. The *de facto* division of the country pains Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and damages U.S. strategic interests in the region. The dysfunctional and unacceptable *status quo* also threatens effective NATO-EU defense cooperation and remains an obstacle for Greek-Turkish relations. Furthermore, I am sure both communities would agree that Turkey, a key NATO ally, would be better off anchored to Europe through EU membership. Yet the continued impasse on Cyprus negatively affects all these considerations. Many outside observers have increasingly asserted that in the absence of a settlement in the near future, the world will accept a *de facto* division *ad infinitum*. This would be a bad outcome, and one we should all strenuously seek to avoid.

Currently, though, there is room for guarded optimism. Many see 2008 as a year of opportunity for Cyprus. Both community leaders state they want the same goal: a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation, and the UN, with strong American support, is considering re-invigorated settlement efforts. Negotiating the details of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation, such as governmental structure, administrative and territorial jurisdictions, security considerations, and property disputes will be a difficult task. Both sides will need strong leadership and undoubtedly have to make hard decisions and settle for some possibly painful compromises, but the goal will be worthwhile: a federation, with a single international sovereignty, enjoying EU membership, peace and prosperity. That goal is achievable, and I hope to help advance it, if confirmed.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to answering any questions.

Public Files\Cyprus\Urbancic Confirmation\Testimony

Drafted: Frank Urbancic & EUR/SE Melissa Clegg-Tripp

Clearances:

EUR/FO:MBryza - ok

EUR/SE:KFitzpatrick - ok

EUR/PGI - TCunningham - ok

EUR/ERA - NOttalah - ok

EUR/ACE - DRosenblum - ok

D - MMcDowell - ok

P - SGuha - ok

H - MTrejo - ok

S/P - HPittman - ok

IO/UNP - AReinemeyer - ok

Embassy Nicosia - ok