

Upcoming Cyprus Conference ‘a unique opportunity,’ says UN negotiator

27 June 2017 – A fresh round of talks on Cyprus will last “as long as it takes,” but there are no guarantees of success, the United Nations negotiator facilitating the process said today.

Speaking to journalists in Geneva, Espen Barth Eide, the UN Special Adviser on Cyprus, said that the reconvening of the Conference is “not the last chance” but the “the best chance” of reaching an agreement between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots.

“It is a unique opportunity, and it would be extremely sad if it was wasted [...] and I think frankly that’s recognized by all participants.”

He highlighted however that sticking points remain between the delegations as they prepared to meet tomorrow in Mont Pèlerin, Switzerland.

“Make no mistake; it’s not going to be easy,” he said, explaining that he and Secretary-General and will “do our utmost” to help. So would the Security Council which has remained “very united” throughout the process, so would the [European Union], which is lending extremely important and productive support, and so would the international financial institutions which are directly involved.

“But none of us can do it for the participants, they have to take the responsibility and try to make the best out of what I see is a unique opportunity,” Mr. Eide underscored.

After decades of division in Cyprus [dating back to 1974](#), the UN envoy said that this was the “best chance” for successful talks and not the last chance, despite the “risks” and the “tense situation” on the Mediterranean island.

There are six main topics up for discussion; they include new territorial boundaries, power-sharing and the economy. Agreement has been found on most of these so-called ‘chapters,’ broadly, and concrete progress achieved, Mr Eide said.

The Turkish-Cypriot delegation had assented to what he called a “significant return of territory” to the Greek-Cypriots, and both sides had also exchanged maps in Geneva in January “an historic first,” the UN negotiator told journalists.

Nonetheless, Mr. Eide said that the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot positions still diverge on the issue of security and guarantees.

“What I’m saying is that on these five chapters, we have made substantive process, on the issue which is most complicated right now and very much in focus now and by the guarantors “Greece, Turkey and the

United Kingdom and others who will be present, is the security and guarantees chapter; that's where the sides are so far opposed," he said.

"But they have also told each other and the world many times that are trying to seek a common vision also on that chapter, and that is what we are trying to do," said Mr. Eide, insisting that this shared viewpoint is something only the Greek-Cypriots and the Turkish-Cypriots could do by talking together.

The UN would be there to help both sides find common ground, he said, so that an agreement owned by the people of Cyprus could prevail.

In a statement issued in New York, the Secretary-General picked up that thread saying that [welcomed](#) the reconvening of the Cyprus Conference and that the "the opportunity for the reunification of Cyprus is now finally before us."

Calling on all concerned players to seize this opportunity, "for Cyprus first and foremost, but also for the wider Eastern Mediterranean region," Mr. Guterres reiterated his steadfast commitment to supporting this effort.

"I urge all participants to demonstrate the will and leadership required to conclude a comprehensive settlement," he concluded.