

The Hague, 25 February 2019

OPEN LETTER TO THE TWO LEADERS OF CYPRUS

Dear Mr Nicos Anastasiades,
Dear Mr Mustafa Akinçi,

I write to you on behalf of EUROPA NOSTRA, the Voice of Cultural Heritage in Europe, to appeal to you to seize the opportunity of your new meeting on 26 February 2019, to discuss the alarming state of heritage and historic buildings which are located in the Buffer Zone of the Walled Town of Nicosia. The recent partial collapse of the walls of the medieval church of St. James (Agios Iakovos), is a deplorable reminder that urgent measures must be undertaken to reinforce and restore the many endangered buildings located in the Buffer Zone in order to prevent further loss of Cyprus' invaluable cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible.

As you know, last October, Europa Nostra organised new visits to the Buffer Zone of Nicosia followed by a major public discussion on the Endangered Cultural Heritage in the Buffer Zone of Nicosia, as part of a 2-day Conference dedicated to the 5th anniversary of the 7 Most Endangered programme, run by Europa Nostra in partnership with the European Investment Bank (EIB) Institute. Subsequently, on 29 November 2018, Europa Nostra wrote to you both to express our grave concern about the deplorable state of deterioration which continued and was indeed accelerating in the Buffer Zone of Nicosia. We, among others, appealed to you "to give the political impetus to the urgently needed reinforcement of two churches located in the Buffer Zone, namely St George's Church and St. James' Church (Agios Iakovos)". We insisted that the condition of these two important historic monuments was particularly alarming and that it was necessary to start the rescue works without any further delay to avoid any irreparable loss. Alas, the partial collapse of the church of St. James is a sad demonstration that Europa Nostra was right to ring the alarm bell.

The Voice of
Cultural Heritage
in Europe

La Voix du
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en Europe

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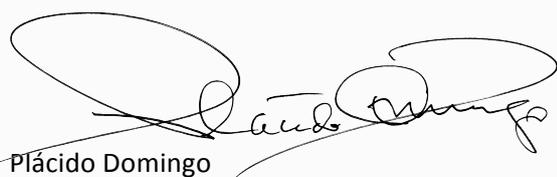
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In light of these most recent developments, we remain confident that you shall seize the opportunity of your meeting tomorrow to reach an agreement between the political and military authorities concerned, both local and international, to allow the Bi-communal Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage - acting in due consultation with the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process - to undertake immediately adequate measures to protect the remains of St. James' Church from adverse weather influence while preparing the complex restoration works to bring the church back to its previous state. They should also be allowed to urgently undertake necessary reinforcement and restoration works to make sure that a similar destiny does not happen either to the nearby 17th century Church of St. George or to a series of other historic buildings located in the Buffer Zone of Nicosia.

We remain hopeful that Europa Nostra's Voice will be heard and that you shall jointly take resolute action to ensure that immediate and effective conservation of the Buffer Zone of the Walled Town of Nicosia becomes a priority issue in your forthcoming negotiations. We could not dream of a better legacy of the successful European Year of Cultural Heritage which was celebrated in 2018 all over Europe by so many heritage institutions, civil society organisations and local communities.

Thanking you in advance for your shared commitment to the safeguard of the shared cultural heritage of Cyprus and Europe as a whole,

Respectfully yours,



Plácido Domingo

