

**Address by the President of the Cyprus Bar Association, Mr Michalis Vorkas on “Challenges for Cyprus and International Law: A conversation with Professor Sir Malcolm Evans”**

It is with great honour and privilege, on behalf of the Cyprus Bar Association, the professional body of advocates in Cyprus, to welcome you to our island for this event titled “*Challenges for Cyprus and International Law*”.

Today’s event will provide us with the unique opportunity to learn from an eminent legal scholar, especially in the light of international developments, about critical issues such as the interaction of rules of different subjects of international law and their application in the case of Cyprus by international judicial bodies.

The establishment of the UN in 1945 and its Charter, encapsulated what world we wanted and should live in.

One of peace and security.

One of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations.

One which is respectful to human rights.

The international legal order which was established with the UN separated right from wrong, and it paved the way for a more civilised world in the aftermath of the destructive World War II and the enormous human suffering that it brought about.

It banned the use of force as a means of resolving disputes between states.

Unfortunately, only 29 years after the establishment of the UN, in 1974, Turkey invaded Cyprus in acute violation of international law and still occupies our island, 50 years later. The human suffering continues until today.

We are well aware that international law in itself can neither protect states, especially small ones, or remedy on its own, an illegal situation in the absence of an enforcement mechanism.

It was international law though, amongst others, that acted as a shield against the illegality of the Turkish invasion and the non-

recognition of the puppet state set up in the occupied areas of the Republic of Cyprus.

It is international law and the commitment of the vast majority of the international community which have, at least, not legitimised the wrongdoings of Turkey.

The Turkish Occupation cannot, and should not, be legitimised due to the passage of time.

There is the force of International Law.

An international law that we lawyers believe in and will continue to raise awareness on.

2024 unfortunately marked 50 years since the illegal invasion of Turkey in Cyprus and the ongoing occupation.

In July 2024 the Cyprus Bar Association organised a two-day seminar which brought legal professionals together, from academia to practising lawyers and other government officials, from Greece, Cyprus and the UK, to discuss various aspects of international, European and national law pertaining to the Cyprus problem.

Professor Evans then highlighted the endurance of international law and that wrongdoings don't just go away.

This is the reality for us in Cyprus. Turkey is still occupying our island.

It has not gone away.

And we still strive for a better future that will be based on the respect of international law and human rights and the EU acquis, without discrimination.

The ICJ's Advisory Opinion on the Chagos Islands is a testament to the force of international law and recent political developments show that it can be the foundation for real change and a victory of legal order.

We should not cease to struggle for a world where International Law is preserved, despite the many difficulties faced and the various aggressors that will always exist.

Turkey's continuous aggression against the Republic of Cyprus, a UN and EU member, needs to end.

We will not forget and will not give way to illegality.

We hope this event offers everybody the opportunity to engage in an active discussion on international law and Cyprus.

I would like to thank the President of the Kyrenia Bar Association, Nicolas Constantinides, the President and Secretary of our Committee on International and European Law, Salome Yiallourou and Eleni Gerasoudi and the Cyprus Bar Association team for their contribution in organising today's event.

I also wish to extend our gratitude to the University of Limassol for supporting this event.

Professor Evans, we are very privileged to have you here today with us and we thank you.