

Address by the Deputy Minister of Migration and International Protection, Dr Nicholas A. Ioannides on “Challenges for Cyprus and International Law: A conversation with Professor Sir Malcolm Evans”

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Honoured guests, esteemed colleagues, and friends,

It is with immense honour and pleasure that I stand before you today at this important gathering. As a representative of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, it is both a privilege and a responsibility to engage in such a timely and relevant conversation about the role of international law in the challenges facing Cyprus both at present and throughout the years.

Allow me to start by expressing my sincere congratulations to the Cyprus Bar Association and its International and European Law Committee for putting together this conference. The decision to host such an event speaks volumes about your commitment to advancing a meaningful dialogue on the pressing issues that Cyprus deals with. As a matter of fact, Cyprus stands at a crucial juncture in its history, and the discussions within the context of this fascinating event will be invaluable in shaping our understanding of the ways international law can help us navigate these challenges.

Unfortunately, Cyprus has been a sort of ‘workshop’ of international law owing to an array of reasons. The long-standing Turkish belligerent occupation of part of our island and its multiple repercussions, including violations of international humanitarian law, international criminal law and human rights. The presence of the UK Sovereign Base Areas and the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. Of course, maritime delimitation, offshore activities and tension in the marine domain.

In this regard, I can think of no one more qualified to engage in this conversation than Professor Sir Malcolm Evans. Professor Evans has been a prominent figure in the field of international law for many years. His academic work has had a profound impact on shaping contemporary international law. As a former student of Professor Evans, I have had the privilege of witnessing first-hand his unparalleled expertise, his deep commitment to the principles of justice, and his passion for the role of international law in addressing global challenges.

I can personally attest to the rigour and integrity he brings to every subject he teaches, and his ability to provoke ideas, inspire debate, and encourage his students to look beyond the surface of legal issues and understand their wider implications.

Sir Malcolm’s distinguished career and wealth of experience make him the most suitable person to lead today’s discussion. His insights into the role of international law in addressing the unique challenges our country has been facing will be extremely useful to us all. His work and contribution to the field are a testament to the power of law as a force for peace, justice, and stability in times of conflict.

This timely event is a first-class opportunity to reflect on the central role international law continues to play in the affairs of the Republic of Cyprus. Whether we are dealing with issues of territorial integrity, human rights, or the intricate web of bilateral and multilateral relations, the solutions we seek will often be found through public international law. Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that international law is not a panacea. It is our responsibility to familiarise ourselves with these rules, to apply them properly, and to ensure that they serve not only our own national interests but also contribute to a global order predicated on peace and fairness. This is actually one of the main goals of the International and European Law Committee of the Cyprus Bar Association, namely to cultivate an international law mentality among lawyers and the general public.

This conference is not only an opportunity to hear from one of the leading minds in international law but also a chance for us all to reflect on our collective responsibility to uphold the values that international law represents. It is also a reminder that the challenges we've been facing, though daunting, are not insurmountable if we remain committed to the law and inter-State cooperation.

In conclusion, I would like to once again congratulate the organisers for their exceptional work in bringing this event to fruition. Your efforts in facilitating this dialogue are commendable, and I am certain that today's event will be merely one of the many steps towards a more comprehensive understanding of how international law can preserve our rights and contribute to the resolution of a range of predicaments.

Thank you all for being here today, and I look forward to the rich and thought-provoking discussion ahead.