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Focuses on Resolution to the Divided Cyprus and the
Country's Impending Accession to the European Union

Washington, DC - As part of his continuing efforts to strengthen the relationship between the United States and Cyprus, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-Fair Lawn) met last week in his Washington, DC office with Cyprus' new Ambassador to the United States, Euripides L. Evriviades. Rothman, a member of the influential House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, discussed the Cypriot government's efforts to reunify the divided nation and create a two-state federation prior to Cyprus' accession to the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004.

"I was very pleased to have the opportunity to meet with Ambassador Evriviades to discuss the Cypriot government's endeavors to create a united bicomunal, bizonal federal republic comprised of the two Cypriot states and to end the Turkish army's 30-year occupation of the northern half of the island," Rothman said.

During the meeting, Rothman and Evriviades also conferred about the United Nations (UN)-backed reunification plan and the efforts made by Cypriot President Tassos Papadopoulos to negotiate with Turkish-Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktash, prior to the Turkish leader's most recent withdrawal from the talks on March 17, 2004. Rothman expressed his strong disappointment at Denktash's decision to withdraw from the bilateral talks once again.

"The continuing refusal on the part of Turkish Cypriot Leader Rauf Denktash to negotiate realistically for a settlement to the conflict demonstrates his preference for partition and ethnic division over reunification and a peaceful bicomunal existence," Rothman said. "It is my hope that the Turkish Cypriot leader will return to the negotiating table prior to the approaching deadline for EU membership. If negotiations remain stalled past the May 1st deadline, only the Greek Cypriots will accede to the European Union. Thus, it is imperative that the two sides come to an agreement and enter the EU as a united two-state federation that is comprised of both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, rather than a split nation that would exclude the Turkish Cypriot population from EU membership."

Rothman recently joined with other members of the Congressional Hellenic Caucus in sending letters to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell to express their belief that any reunification agreement explicitly recognize, among other provisions, property rights, the demilitarization of Cyprus, and the establishment of all legal obligations of the guarantor powers (Turkey, Greece, and Britain).

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