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Washington, DC - With hopes of an end to the tragic divisions that have plagued Cyprus for nearly 30 years, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) today applauded Greek Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides' announcement that the Greek Cypriot government has accepted a United Nations (U.N.) plan for the reunification of Cyprus as the basis of negotiations with the Turkish Cypriots. Rothman called upon the Turkish Cypriots to have the same courage as the Greek Cypriots and accept the plan.

"This is a critical time for negotiations on the reunification of Cyprus," said Rothman, a member of the House Appropriations Foreign Operations Subcommittee, which allocated \$15 million in U.S. aid to Cyprus for educational and bicomunal projects for this year. "The Greek Cypriot people have once again set aside their own interests to accept the U.N. plan as a basis of negotiations for peace on Cyprus. I commend the brave Greek Cypriot people and their leaders for their commitment to peace and a better future for the people of Cyprus."

The U.N. plan, proposed by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, details a reunited Cyprus as one country, with two equal states and a loose federal government. Despite the fact that the Turkish Cypriots did not meet Annan's deadline for a response to the proposal, unlike the Greek Cypriots, the U.N. leader is still hoping that they will accept the plan. Annan hopes the two sides will come to a final agreement by December 12, 2002, when the European Union (E.U.) will hold a summit in Copenhagen to approve the entry of Cyprus and nine other prospective members into the E.U. by 2004. If the two sides fail to reach an agreement on unification, the E.U. is expected to admit only the Greek Cypriot part of Cyprus.

"I urge, in the strongest terms possible, Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash to meet the Greek Cypriots at the negotiating table and agree to this fair proposal by Secretary-General Annan," said Rothman, a member of the bipartisan Congressional Caucus on Hellenic Issues, which seeks to increase the bonds of understanding and friendship between the American people and the people of Greece and Cyprus. "This agreement to the U.N. plan as a basis of negotiations was not an easy decision for the Greek Cypriots. Rather, it was an attempt to put aside differences in the pursuit of peace and unification. I call on Mr. Denktash to make that same effort."

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