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Famagusta

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Mr David Burrowes (Enfield, Southgate) (Con): I beg to move— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): Order. Members are being exceedingly discourteous to the hon. Gentleman, who is trying to move the motion.

Mr Burrowes: I beg to move,

That this House supports the comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem based on a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation with political equality, as set out in the relevant Security Council Resolutions and the High Level Agreements; endorses the Declaration of the European Parliament of 14 February 2012 on the return of Famagusta to its lawful inhabitants; notes that the city of Famagusta in the Republic of Cyprus was captured by the invading Turkish forces in August 1974, that a section of Famagusta was then sealed off and remains uninhabited, under the direct control of the Turkish military, and that the return of Famagusta to its lawful inhabitants would facilitate efforts toward a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem; further notes the 1979 High Level Agreement and UN Security Council Resolutions 550 (1984) and 789 (1992) and the 2008 Report of the Committee on Petitions of the European Parliament on Petition 733/2004; calls on the government of Turkey to act according to those UN Security Council Resolutions and Report Recommendations and return Famagusta to its lawful inhabitants, who must resettle under conditions of security and peace; urges the Government, as a guarantor power of Cyprus, to promote Turkey's cooperation; and directs the Speaker to forward this Resolution to President Nicos Anastasiades, Mr Mustafa Akinci, the UN Secretary General and the government of Turkey.

The massacre in Paris is rightly dominating public and parliamentary attention, so the question might be asked, "Why is a motion about Cyprus being debated today?" I could reply with a phrase commonly used by many of my Cypriot constituents: why not? In fact, Cypriots have been asking why not for more than 40 years, since the occupation and division of Cyprus in 1974. Why not justice for Cyprus? Other divided and occupied countries have seen freedoms over those 40 or so years, but Cyprus remains one of the longest-running unresolved issues in British foreign policy.

This issue matters to my constituents because I represent the most Cypriots, both Greek and Turkish, in the world. I am proud to represent them, but it is sad that nowhere else in the world do so many Greek and Turkish Cypriots live freely side by side, working, socialising and trading with

each other—in my constituency, they live together along Green Lanes, but in Cyprus they are divided by the green line.

Cyprus remains one of the most militarised places per head of population anywhere in the world. When we think of the current conflicts around the world, that is an extraordinary fact. When we note the tens of thousands of Turkish troops in the north of Cyprus, we have to ask ourselves why this is continuing, day after day, year after year. We know that Cyprus is a member of the European Union, yet it is tragically and intolerably divided and occupied. That provides the context of the motion before us today.

Why should consideration of this issue fall to this particular Parliament? As we know, Britain has a significant historical interest in Cyprus, as well as a legal interest as one of the guarantor powers. In recent months and days, Cyprus stands as an obvious strategic interest,

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given its location in a troubled region, and it is home to sovereign base areas that are significant for the wider world. We know, too, that RAF Tornados are based there, conducting operations, and there might be further ones to come.

Dr Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on bringing forward this important debate. He mentions Dhekelia and Akrotiri as the sovereign base areas, and he will know that previous Cypriot Governments, if not the current one, were very keen to get their hands on those sovereign base areas. To what extent does my hon. Friend think attention is taken away from those areas by the current conflict between the Turkish and Cypriot sides? Once that is resolved, which I hope it soon will be, does he fear that attention might refocus on Dhekelia and Akrotiri?

Mr Burrowes: I should declare an interest as a member of the Conservative Friends of Cyprus, which recently visited the country, returning at the weekend. Cyprus has a Conservative President, President Anastasiades, who has taken a very sensible view of the sovereign base areas. Indeed, an important agreement was reached with the British Government on appropriate property development to support Cyprus on the road to economy recovery. This was a very pragmatic and appropriate use of those base areas, showing a keen understanding of the ongoing strategic interests of those base areas for wider security in the region. I think Cyprus is in good hands, and we hope for a comprehensive settlement, which, together with our ongoing strategic interest, could make Cyprus a beacon to other nations, providing the stability the region needs so much.

This House has conducted a number of debates on Cyprus, many of which were secured by me and by other hon. Members whom I see here. What makes this particular debate different is that we have a substantive motion, and I would like to thank the Backbench Business Committee for agreeing to it. The basis of the motion is, in many ways, public support, with a petition signed by 50,000 Greek and Turkish Cypriots being presented to the Prime Minister back in 2012. It follows up the declaration of the European Parliament of 14 February 2012, calling for the return of Famagusta. If such a motion can be good for the European Parliament, it can certainly be good for our British Parliament.

We often say in this place that our debates are timely. That is certainly true of the particular motion before us—not just because six of my hon. Friends who are in their places today have just returned

from a visit with the Conservative Friends of Cyprus, but because the two leaders of Cyprus are undertaking an intense period of negotiation this month to reach a settlement to the Cyprus problem.

Our meetings with both Greek and Turkish Cypriots revealed an encouraging positive approach to the talks. Indeed, Ambassador Andreas Mavroyiannis, the Greek Cypriot negotiator, described it as the “best chance ever”. Very pertinently, he said that if we do not succeed now, “we may never succeed”. That echoes the Foreign Secretary’s remarks a couple of months ago, who also has great timing as I understand he will be visiting Cyprus on Thursday. He said that the stars were “optimistically aligned” to create the chance for a settlement, the like of which we have not seen in decades. I thus

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look forward to hearing the Minister affirming the Government’s support for the comprehensive settlement, which we need as soon as possible.

Why the particular focus of this motion on Famagusta? The reason is all too clear, as it was to my hon. Friends who were in Cyprus on Saturday and saw for themselves, as I did, very visible on the beach of Famagusta the fenced-off area of Varosha.

Mrs Sheryll Murray (South East Cornwall) (Con): I declare an interest, too, because I accompanied my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr Burrowes) on the recent trip to Cyprus. Famagusta has some of the most beautiful beaches in the world, and they would play a strong part in the economy. I know that because my constituents in South East Cornwall also have some beautiful beaches. Will my hon. Friend join me in encouraging both sides to come to an agreement so that we do not see these beaches divided by a dreadful barrier, with part of Famagusta being a ghost town?

Mr Burrowes: My hon. Friend speaks with some experience about tourism and the beautiful coastlines that benefit from it. She is right so say how important it is that Famagusta, which previously generated 53% of Cyprus’s tourism, should no longer be a ghost town— a sharp contrast in what was the jewel of the Mediterranean. Every day that Famagusta remains as it is a day of injustice, which is why we must not tolerate it. While we appropriately recognise and support the comprehensive settlement, we must recognise that Famagusta and its return is a key element in facilitating such a settlement.

Mike Freer (Finchley and Golders Green) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this debate; I know how hard he fights for his Cypriot constituents, whether they be of Turkish or Greek heritage. Does he agree with me that Famagusta is a visible reminder that Cyprus is the only EU country occupied by a foreign power—Turkey—and that we cannot allow Turkey to accede to the EU until it withdraws from Cyprus?

Mr Burrowes: My hon. Friend has been a champion of these causes over a number of years. The Famagustans in the Public Gallery are acutely aware of that very fact. They, along with 40,000 others, fled their town. They recognise that they have lost not only their town but their freedom and justice. We all recognise that this is a scar on Europe—a scar that must be sorted out, sooner rather than later. It is the visible reality of a divided, occupied island that stands out, but it also offers the hope and opportunity to provide credibility for a settlement.

That is recognised by all the communities who formed the basis for the motion by signing the petition. Together, they recognise the importance of this act of justice. They have called for the two UN Security Council resolutions 550 and 780 to be properly fulfilled. Sadly, Turkey has ignored that. I invite the Minister to let us know what steps have been taken to ensure that we get co-operation from Turkey. We must see co-operation to ensure that this comprehensive settlement is truly credible and will have a reality. Britain has a key role to play in securing it, and providing assurance about the safety and security that everyone wants.

The return of Famagusta was described during our visits as a game-changer.

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab) *rose* —

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Mr Burrowes: Before I explain why it is a game-changer, I give way to the hon. Lady.

Catherine West: I thank the hon. Gentleman and congratulate him and his colleagues on securing this debate. Does he agree that there is a lot of cross-party support for a deal, and that we could indeed bring about the very moment when both sides come together, extending the arm of friendship and gaining a great deal of support in the region for a settlement? Does he also agree that it is good that the Cabinet Secretary has twice visited Cyprus over the last 12 months, which must also be a positive step?

Mr Burrowes: Those are all very positive steps. What we also need is to provide a reality to the agreements, given that they have been reached in the past but without meeting the approval of the public on both sides. One key way of making an agreement a reality is through Famagusta. We cannot get away from Famagusta, which is the subject of this motion. It matters. Opening the ports, run jointly by both Greek and Turkish Cypriots under the supervision of the EU or the UN, would dramatically help to support, financially, a reunited Cyprus.

Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East) (Lab): I am the co-chair of the all-party parliamentary group for the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, and I have just returned from a visit to the area with other members of the group. While we were there, we met the President, Mr Akinci, and other politicians, including the Prime Minister. They seemed very optimistic that there would be a deal and settlement very shortly. We also met and discussed these matters with the British ambassador in Cyprus. I understand that the issue of Varosha is very much part of the discussions that have taken place there, and I sensed from the discussions in which I engaged that it was hoped that, sooner rather than later, there would be a settlement of some kind.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): Order. The hon. Lady will have plenty of opportunities to make a speech later: the Labour Benches are not overpopulated. It is bad form to make a very long intervention.

Mr Burrowes: I am grateful for the hon. Lady's intervention. As she said, and as we observed ourselves during our visit, there is real positivity among both Turkish and Greek Cypriots. I had visited the area many times before, but on this occasion there was clearly genuine support for Mr Akinci and Prime Minister Anastasiades, who were making good progress. We should wish them the very best in their endeavours.

It is also important for us to note the role of Turkey, and the need for proper co-operation. Turkey's opening up of ports is a good sign. If Turkey removed its troops from the island and recognised the Ankara protocol and the customs union—which would result from the opening up of the port of Famagusta—that would allow proper recognition of the need for free movement of goods and trade, and would remove obstacles from Turkey's path to accession to the European Union. Those are all important aspects of the proper, comprehensive settlement that would provide reassurance.

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Mrs Sheryll Murray: During our visit, we saw churches desecrated and graves robbed. Does my hon. Friend not think that a settlement would help the people of Cyprus to rebuild religious tolerance and understanding in all the communities on the island?

Mr Burrowes: I agree. There is much sadness on what is a beautiful island. There are humanitarian issues such as religious and cultural destruction, and the issue—which may well be mentioned later—of missing persons and the need to find truth for relatives who still have no information about their loved ones. There is also the humanitarian issue of Famagusta, which demands all our attention and demands justice.

I hope that the Minister will tell us that the Government support the motion. He would not have to be too bold, because he would have the backing of the Prime Minister, who wrote to me on 29 June 2012 about the petition which, in effect, referred to this motion. He wrote:

“we fully agree with the principle behind it; that measures to build confidence between the communities in Cyprus can have great value in facilitating efforts towards a comprehensive settlement.”

He also wrote:

“We fully support all the relevant Security Council resolutions, including UNSCR 550 and UNSCR 789.”

So there is the Prime Minister's backing. The Minister simply needs to say that he agrees with the Prime Minister.

Time is short. Others wish to speak, and I shall leave it to them—with your leave, Madam Deputy Speaker—to raise a number of issues that may go beyond the motion. Let me end by saying this. I left Cyprus at the weekend, along with a number of my hon. Friends. Many people who visit a tourist destination such as Cyprus leave with souvenirs such as duty-free goods—they may even try to leave with tortoises—but I brought back a list of questions for the Prime Minister, which I shall now read.

Will the Government support access for experts to Varosha, so that they can assess the damage and the requirements for restoration and regeneration? If we are serious about the return of Famagusta and a comprehensive settlement, we should be serious about enabling experts to go there now.

In relation to our guarantor powers, will Britain indicate that external countries' guarantees have no future following a comprehensive settlement? Do the Government stand ready to help following settlement negotiations when intractable issues may require Turkish co-operation?

There has been good bi-communal progress on the issue of missing persons. The Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus is an exemplar, providing support in areas of conflict across the world, working not only with other committees in directing that support, but with lab technicians from both communities. It has done painstaking work in seeking information and DNA that can be linked with missing persons. There has been good news recently: the Turkish army is to provide access to 30 military bases over the next three years, which will provide important information. Will the Government go further, however, and continue to ask the Turkish Government to provide information that is still being kept in their archives? Relatives of missing

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people rally here in Parliament every July. Can we persuade Turkey to provide that information about their loved ones?

I do not propose to speak for much longer, because others wish to contribute. This is a historic motion, which not only sets the scene for a general debate, but makes it crystal clear that we stand full square behind a comprehensive settlement that will be good for Cyprus, good for the region, and good for Britain. We can make that a reality if we provide justice for Famagusta and return it to its lawful inhabitants.

Dr Matthew Offord (Hendon) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr Burrowes) on securing the debate. As he said, it is extremely timely, given that six of my colleagues and I travelled to the divided island of Cyprus only last week. It was not my first visit, and, indeed, it was not the first time that I had crossed the border and entered the occupied territory, but it was my first opportunity to travel to Famagusta.

I could speak about many issues that arose during that trip. I could speak about our encounter with the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus—which people found very moving—about stolen artefacts, or about access to property or land. However, I want to make just two points. First, I want to describe my observation of a situation on the island which I found truly inexplicable. Secondly, I want to talk about the effect of the huge military presence in the occupied zone.

Let me begin by talking about the beaches, particularly those in Famagusta. To witness what I can only describe as a ghost town, frozen in time, would be interesting if it did not affect so many people in the here and now. Many people are unable to visit the graves of their relatives or friends, access their properties or businesses, or even visit their own beaches without harassment.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): There are 371 people—mostly conscripts from this country—buried in Wayne’s Keep. We must ensure that we have access to that graveyard and look after it. Those men were killed mainly by Greek Cypriot terrorist fighters, and we must not forget that.

Dr Offord: My hon. Friend is right. As the record shows, I have asked parliamentary questions about the issue, because we have our own graves in that country. I shall not open a debate about the historical aspects of the island—we realise that there are many sides to all the stories that we can tell—but we are very concerned about the graves of all the people on the island, be they Turkish Cypriots, Greek Cypriots or British service personnel who died and were buried there.

I can name some of the people who have been affected. These are not names that I have plucked out of the air. There is Maria, who was formerly a regular visitor to the beach; there is Antonis, who is denied access to his grandfather’s property; and there is Costas, who is unable to visit the King

George hotel, where his father worked for more than 30 years. Those are all real people with stories to tell. Owing to the behaviour of the authorities, which we experienced, I shall not reveal their surnames, because I fear that there would be further repercussions against them.

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What I found striking about Famagusta was not just the sight of hundreds of residential and commercial properties lying empty, but the simple issue of access to the beach. I think that my hon. Friends the Members for Gower (Byron Davies), for Cleethorpes (Martin Vickers) and for South East Cornwall (Mrs Murray) will relate to this, given that they have coastal constituencies.

Walking along the sand in Famagusta means having to enter a contested area, alongside the overbearing corrugated iron and barbed-wire fences which enclose the tower blocks that surround the beach and give it the air of a militarised zone. This barrier extends across and alongside the beach until it meets the curvature of the water's edge and then enters the sea, preventing anyone from moving along the coast. Both that and the mines in the sea ensure that there is no access. To someone who grew up on a beach—literally—I would find that very difficult to explain. Even if someone could navigate that, the military presence in the watchtower will shout at them to get away from the fence and certainly not to take any pictures. I wonder whether the Turkish authorities are embarrassed by that sight. I leave it to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and other Members in the Chamber to decide whether that is so; I certainly think that it is.

In an attempt to intimidate us even further, the Turkish authorities had another security presence on the beach. He was quite a peculiar person, in his own shorts and with comb-over long grey hair. He marched around the beach at great pace, walking closely by us to intimidate and to see what we were doing, and all the time we could hear the Turkish border guards shouting at him through his earpiece at the top of their voices. It was one of the most peculiar scenes I have ever seen.

It is not just the environment in Famagusta that has been physically manipulated by the Turkish forces; so, too, have the people who have been relocated from mainland Turkey—the settlers, known as the *Türkiyeli*. Northern Cyprus's first official census performed in 1996 showed that there were more than 200,000 people in the occupied territory. A decade later that had increased by 65,000. A third census was carried out by the United Nations in 2011, and it recorded a population of over 294,000, but these results have been disputed by many political parties, trade unions and indeed local newspapers. Accusations of under-counting were made because the TNRC—Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus—had said to Turkey that there were more than 700,000 people in the occupied territory in order to gain access to greater funds. What we do know as a fact is that over 50% of the people who come from the mainland have no common heritage or culture with the indigenous Turkish or Cypriot people.

We often hear in this Chamber—I am sure the Minister has heard me say it to him many times—about the settlements in Israel and how they are illegal under international law. I am sure, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you are glad that I will not be opening up that debate, but I never hear criticism of Turkey for doing the same thing, yet its actions are a clear breach of the fourth Geneva convention. Article 49 makes it clear that an occupying power may not forcibly deport protected persons or deport or transfer parts of its civilian population into occupied territory. Turkey has done this; Turkey has clearly breached this convention and there can be no dispute that immigration to the occupied territory is unlawful.

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What is not disputed is the number of Turkish troops in the north. In 2013 the Cyprus Center for Strategic Studies estimated that 74,000 troops were based in the occupied territory in Cyprus, an area of 1,295 square miles. To put that into context, in April the UK had 87,060 Army service personnel and we have a land mass of 83,700 square miles. The contrast is obvious and illustrates Turkey's determination to maintain its military presence in Cyprus.

Indeed, on Saturday we witnessed the over-the-top display of soldiers, trucks and howitzers as traffic was stopped to allow army personnel to travel through Famagusta. It was clear that this was purely a public display of weaponry designed to do little more than intimidate the indigenous Turkish and Cypriot population into not seeking the removal of the Turkish army in the occupied territory.

The European Parliament has repeatedly voiced its support for the return of Famagusta to its lawful inhabitants. The resettlement of Varosha and Famagusta on the basis of UN Security Council resolutions would have a positive effect in seeking a comprehensive, viable solution to the Cyprus problem, as it would create a tangible example of co-operation and coexistence between Greek and Turkish Cypriots on the island and serve as a symbol of future harmony and prosperity.

Famagusta may be a forbidden, occupied town in Cyprus, but it will never be a forgotten community among its lawful inhabitants and its friends in this place.

Sir David Amess (Southend West) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr Burrowes) on securing this debate and on his brilliant leadership of the recent delegation, of which I was privileged to be a member. I should tell the House that I found none of my colleagues disagreeable on that trip. My hon. Friend exhibited true leadership skills, and if ever an hon. Friend were fit for office, it is he.

I am delighted that the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood) will be responding to this debate, because I know him well, and he is not a Minister who will respond with a lot of waffle. I anticipate that he will agree with everything said in this debate, and given that, as I understand it, the Foreign Secretary will be visiting Cyprus in a short while, the timing of this debate could not be better.

When I first became a Member of Parliament, I was taken to the island of Cyprus. I have no constituency interest at all—very few Cypriots, whether Greek or Turkish, live in my constituency—but when I visited that tiny island I could not believe that it was divided by a green line. This debate focuses on Famagusta and I can best liken it to “Great Expectations” and Miss Havisham. It is very much a time warp. It is very distressing to see the buildings that have stood empty, decaying since 1974, which is an absolute disgrace.

At the start of the visit, I was very cynical about the prospect of a settlement, because I had heard it all before. As we all know, there is no problem between Cypriots, whether they live on the north or south side. It is when the two mother countries start to intervene that things become challenging. However, I was very impressed by the meetings we had, and particularly with what the acting President and the negotiator had to say. I therefore

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think that that will be the last time that any British parliamentary group will visit a divided island. I am very optimistic that in two or three months' time we will at long last see a united island. I therefore again congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate on his timing of our trip.

We could go back to 1974 and say that it was a disaster that should never have happened—we can often be wise after the event—and it is indeed a tragedy that those events occurred then and that all these years later the situation has not been resolved, but I have decided that it is no good going on about the past; we have to draw a line under it, as Cypriots on both sides have decided to do.

I was very pleased that on 18 September our Prime Minister met the Greek Cypriot President and there was a general meeting of minds on the issue. I believe there is a need for Turkey to send specific signals through specific actions that would enhance the ongoing settlement process. The recent election of the new leader on the northern side is widely seen as having significantly increased the prospect of a solution.

Mrs Murray: Does my hon. Friend agree that this also presents an opportunity for the missing persons to be located and identified? We have seen for ourselves the bones of both Greek and Cypriot persons, which had seemingly been strewn across tables, being sorted in the anthropological laboratory. It should be a priority for both sides to come together so those who lost loved ones can lay them to rest.

Sir David Amess: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend, although I have not seen the details of the DNA testing that was carried out on the bones.

Returning to the election of the new leader, his first act on assuming office was to abolish the entry visa for visitors to northern Cyprus. The requirement for such a visa had long angered Greek Cypriots, so this was a very positive move. Of course there are obstacles to overcome, relating to governance, security, territory and—as my hon. Friends the Members for Enfield, Southgate and for Hendon (Dr Offord) have mentioned—refugees. However, if relations continue to be positive, as they certainly seem to be, I am optimistic that with the support of the UK—which I was told over and over again was absolutely crucial—there could be a fairly swift unification, perhaps within two to three months.

The potential impact on Greek Cypriots of the return of Famagusta cannot be overestimated. It would be very significant indeed. It would be an enormous confidence-builder for Greek Cypriots; it would also be an important humanitarian move that would allow the return of 40,000 people to their homes. My hon. Friend the Member for South East Cornwall (Mrs Murray) has mentioned missing persons. I think I am right in saying that about 1,500 Greek Cypriots and about 500 Turkish Cypriots are missing.

We were all shocked by the detail of the work that is going into tracing those missing people. We were taken to the laboratories. If any of us had had a loved one whose bones were somewhere in the room, it would have been overwhelming, but we managed to step back because we did not know any of the people involved.

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I had had no idea of the forensic detail of the work, and the House should know that it is a very expensive operation. The Department for International Development is stretched on this issue, but

if there is anyone who could lend financial support to the programme, it would mean a great deal to all those concerned.

Mr Burrowes: Anyone who visits Cyprus would surely be encouraged to see the work of the bi-communal committee on missing persons. The laboratory that we visited is on British land, and I understand that we have given it support in the form of a vehicle and in other ways. It is also encouraging that the Foreign Secretary will visit that laboratory. It will be good for him to see how we might provide as much support, either financial or in kind, as is necessary to obtain the information that the relatives of those missing persons need.

Sir David Amess: My hon. Friend makes a wonderful point. He is absolutely right about the timing of the Foreign Secretary's visit. It was explained to us that we will never find all the missing persons, but it would mean a great deal if that work could be continued for the foreseeable future.

Bob Stewart: I am the chairman of Remembering Srebrenica, which works on tracing people who went missing in Srebrenica. It is not that difficult to get the DNA off a bone and compare it with a DNA sample taken from a close relative. Those are the two parts of the process, which can be done quite quickly under the auspices of the United Nations.

Sir David Amess: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point, but it was explained to us that there is a difficulty, in that some of the burial grounds are now under multi-storey buildings such as housing developments. It is therefore not quite so straightforward as we might hope.

Dr Offord: May I remind my hon. Friend that finding the bones is also complicated by the fact that some have been dispersed by wild animals, some have been washed away and some have been bleached by the sun? Those that have been bleached in that way often lose their DNA.

Sir David Amess: I thank my hon. Friend for reminding me of that fact. The experts are doing a fantastic job, but there is a limit to how far they can go.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon also mentioned the graves. I was shocked and horrified to see that many of the Greek Cypriot graves had been totally vandalised, with their crosses broken up and the ground dug up by people searching for riches like those the Egyptians used to have. However, the Turkish graves, just opposite, were kept in magnificent order, and all through European Union funding. It is an absolute scandal. It is an insult, and the House would be well directed to find out more information about this. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate tried to get a group of volunteers to go over there to do something about the graves. This is a relatively small matter which, given the will to do it, could be put right very quickly. The lady who took us to see where her loved ones were buried broke down in our arms, and my hon. Friend the Member for South East Cornwall comforted her.

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Mrs Murray: Does my hon. Friend also acknowledge that it is not only the graveyards but the churches that have been destroyed? In my opinion, that is all part of the oppression of the people, and something really should be done to rectify the situation.

Sir David Amess: Absolutely. It was so insulting to see that one of the churches had been turned into a stable. If only we had had the archbishop or his deputy with us on those trips! That would have made it even better. I believe that we could do something about the graves.

We need to endorse the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's mission, which states:

“We work with Cyprus to implement policy on Europe and the single market, building trade for mutual growth. We support all parties in finding a comprehensive settlement in Cyprus and work together to beat international crime and threats to British and international security.”

I would like to commend the Cypriot President for all his efforts on the unification of Cyprus. If all goes well, the island could be a wonderful model for coexistence between Muslims and Christians. Cyprus now has a real opportunity to reach an agreement that would be a wonderful thing for Europe and the world.

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab): I have not been to Cyprus. It sounds as though I might have missed a really fun trip and that you all had a really positive experience in the last couple of weeks—

Mrs Sheryll Murray: I have to say to the hon. Lady that it was not fun to see graves that had been destroyed or to see beaches with a great big barrier down the middle of them. It certainly was not a fun trip for me or for any of my colleagues.

Catherine West: I thank the hon. Lady for that clarification. Perhaps one feels a little excluded, not having visited Cyprus with the group. On this question, there is no division between us. It should be an all-party parliamentary thing, because we all want the same thing, but one cannot help but feel a little left out of the debate this evening.

I want to talk about the contribution of the Cypriot community—the Turkish speakers and the Greek speakers—to business, to local government, to catering, to IT facilities and services and to our diet in Haringey. The Mediterranean diet and the arrival of fresh fruit and veg on our high streets began the revolution towards a healthy way of life and the move away from the staple of fish and chips towards wonderful vegetables, olive oil and so on. I know that the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr Burrowes) will agree that north London has been greatly enriched by the diet that the Cypriots have brought us from the 1970s onwards.

On a more serious note, the hon. Member for South East Cornwall (Mrs Murray) is right to say that there has been much suffering in Cyprus. I believe that there has been suffering on both sides. Older Cypriots have told me that they want to see some kind of hopeful conclusion to what has been a terrible experience for them, before the end of their lives. They want to see that conclusion for their children and their grandchildren,

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but it is not enough for them to know that it will happen at some point; they want to be part of it and to see it before they pass on.

There are sticking points, though, and Famagusta is one of them, as are the land disputes. We got close to a settlement two decades ago—

Byron Davies (Gower) (Con): Does the hon. Lady agree that an important feature of our visit last week was the fact that the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots want to live together and are quite happy to do so? It is the Turkish Government who are stopping that at the moment.

Catherine West: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. Certainly, both my Turkish speaking and my Greek speaking colleagues and friends in the borough of Haringey are always talking about the place of Cyprus, and we are the Friends of Cyprus. It is important to remember that sense of togetherness, and the fact that we need to bring the formalities together. We need the Cabinet Secretaries in place, and we need to live up to the reality, which I believe we can do.

Mr Burrowes: The hon. Lady emphasises that we are debating a cross-party motion. Indeed, there has been cross-party support over the years. There is also cross-party support for the Friends of Cyprus. As we are in neighbouring constituencies, she must be aware that Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots will work together and agree on lots of things, but they will not necessarily agree on Cyprus. However, on the issue of Famagusta, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots have, quite uniquely in many ways, signed petitions and come together to say that this is a really good confidence-building measure that can facilitate a comprehensive settlement. That is a point that we need to keep emphasising and for which we need to encourage support.

Catherine West: That is right. We have to show that it is impossible for other Governments to ignore the huge swell of support. The most important thing is Cyprus itself. We should provide an example so that regional Governments have to support the idea.

We must bottom out the disagreements over land before we get close to a settlement. I hope we can assist with that. A number of my right hon. and hon. Friends have come along to speak this evening. My hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Sir Alan Meale) has played a key role for many years, working with colleagues across the piece on the environment and other such issues.

As a new Member of Parliament with a commitment to the place of Cyprus, I hope that I can now join the table. I am pleased to see that there is another hon. Lady in our midst, because my experience of other such meetings has been rather lonely. I look forward to seeing her at future events to talk about the unification of Cyprus.

Sir Roger Gale (North Thanet) (Con): Let me first say to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West) that the baton—the chairmanship of the all-party group—has been smartly passed from my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr Burrowes) to me. Either I or the hon. Member for

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Mansfield (Sir Alan Meale) will certainly ensure that she gets a chance to see the position for herself. Some colleagues have seen the Berlin wall, but not everybody has seen the green line in Cyprus. Right through the centre of one of Europe's major cities is a barricade. There are several yards of barren land, with buildings going back to 1974 when everything stopped. There are 1974 cars in the car showroom, meals still on the table, and change still on the table. It is quite extraordinary. Unless colleagues have seen that for themselves, they do not understand how desperate the situation is.

It is quite wrong that, since 1974 when Turkey invaded the northern part of Cyprus, a European Union member state, Cyprus, has been occupied by an aspirant member state of the European Union, Turkey. Successive attempts to resolve the problems have failed. That is not, as has been said, because Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots do not get on together: they do by and large—well, as much as anybody else does—and they live happily side by side. There was a time, a

generation and a half ago, when Greek Cypriots spoke Turkish and Turkish Cypriots spoke Greek and they used the same bars, cafes and coffee bars, they played sport together and they coexisted in the same villages in harmony.

Sadly, a generation and a half down the line, that is beginning to change. Now there is a generation of children—some of Turkish settlers and some of Greek Cypriots—who have never known the other side, have never spoken Turkish or Greek and have never shared each other's cultures, much of which is very similar. [*Interruption.*] I am coming to Varosha Famagusta, Madam Deputy Speaker; I am just trying to set the matter in context. By the way, I should have declared an interest as an honorary citizen of Morphou who takes part, by invitation, in the annual march.

I have been working on the Cyprus problem—as it is known—since 1983, which is when I first came into the House, and I have not seen a great deal of progress, but there is a window of opportunity now.

The leader of Northern Cyprus, Mustafa Akinci, used to be the mayor of the northern part of Nicosia when Lellos Demetriades was the mayor of Nicosia. The reason that is important is that, while everybody else was fighting, not getting on and posturing, Lellos Demetriades and Mustafa Akinci got together literally in the dead of night and planned the sewers for the whole of Nicosia, because patently, there cannot be two sewerage systems for one major city. They also planned the water systems. They even planned the road system, so that one day, looking downstream when there would be a settlement, the roads would join up, and they will.

I do not believe that Mustafa Akinci, who was capable of that degree of foresight and co-operation, is not capable of reaching a deal with Nicos Anastasiades, the current President of the Republic of Cyprus. Such a deal can, and should, happen. In the interests of the peace of the whole of the middle east and the whole of Europe, it must happen, but for it to happen, unfortunately, Turkey must agree.

Recently I have seen the welcome mat put out for Turkey. For very obvious reasons, we need Turkey at the moment. It is, for example, taking thousands and thousands of refugees from Syria and it is rightly looking for help. The idea that we can fast track Turkey into a European

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Union without settling the Cyprus problem is a non-starter; it is simply a red line—or shall I say a green line? Both Front-Bench teams must use their best endeavours to seek to ensure that Turkey comes to the negotiating table and does the deal. Yes, the hon. Lady and my hon. Friends were right to say that without the settlement of the property issues there will be no settlement. Without the right of freedom of movement, there will be no settlement. Without the removal of Turkish troops from Northern Cyprus, there will be no settlement. How would it feel if we had said after the war that we would keep troops there in perpetuity? Why should the Cypriots—Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots—settle for the presence of foreign troops, even one foreign troop, on their land without invitation? If they are there by invitation, that is a different matter. The Greek troops and the Turkish troops have to leave the island.

The rest gets harder. Property is very difficult indeed, as much of the land has been built on. We know who owns the land, but who now owns the houses? It will not be easy. It will take money and it will take time, but it has to happen. The bottom line is a bi-communal and bizonal federation.

That is the goal, and it is achievable, but we say to our Cypriot friends, some of whom are in the House tonight, “We are with you and we will stay with you for long as it takes.”

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): I join others in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr Burrowes) not only on securing the debate but on his excellent leadership of the delegation that visited Cyprus a few days ago. It was my first visit not just to Famagusta but to Cyprus itself. It is a beautiful island and the beach at Famagusta runs Cleethorpes a close second.

Mrs Sheryll Murray: Does my hon. Friend not believe that south-east Cornwall comes above Cleethorpes?

Martin Vickers: No. I am afraid that I cannot agree with my hon. Friend, as I am sure she anticipated.

As always in countries where there is conflict and division, it is the ordinary people who suffer. We had the privilege of meeting a number of them over the past few days, including those who suffer what has already been described by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess), witnessing the desecration of their churches and the vandalism of their graveyards. That scars them permanently and we must do all we can to improve that situation. It is damaging to not only those individuals but the heritage and culture of the Cypriot island and people.

I will not detain the House unnecessarily, as my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West has focused on the point about the committee for missing people that I wanted to highlight. This was the second time that I had visited a place such as that which we visited on Friday, where we saw bones and DNA. My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart) intervened earlier, and it was with him that I visited similar work being done in Bosnia this time last year. It is harrowing and the meticulous work of those involved deserves recognition. As my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West pointed out, modest resources are needed to maintain and enhance that work and I hope that the Government

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will look favourably on that request. It need not necessarily involve taxpayers’ money, but could involve donations in kind from the private sector. I am sure that if the work is highlighted to a greater extent donations will be forthcoming.

Mr Burrowes: My hon. Friend might remember that it was, I think, my hon. Friend the Member for Tamworth (Christopher Pincher) who mentioned the potential to use the good will of a constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Burton (Andrew Griffiths) to provide an extra digger. The digger is perhaps one of the most expensive parts of the kit needed to try to find missing persons, and that might be a useful in-kind donation.

Martin Vickers: That is exactly the point I was trying to make. If we were to make known what is required to a greater extent, I am sure that donations would be forthcoming.

It meant a great deal to me to visit the former Nicosia airport, which gives an impression of being frozen in time, as do the empty and derelict buildings in Famagusta.

Bob Stewart: I used to fly from Nicosia airport—I am that old—and I used also to go on the beaches of Famagusta as a boy. It is crucial that we get both areas functioning again. The United Nations,

which has manned the green line for so long and has done so well, could well be redeployed to help with Famagusta and open up the airport. That would end the sterility that has faced these areas for the past 40 years.

Martin Vickers: I entirely agree. The island is heavily dependent on tourism and every opportunity to enhance that would surely be welcome.

At the airport, as elsewhere, we saw bullet-scarred buildings that were a constant reminder of what happened 41 years ago. What purpose does the continuation of this division serve? I urge our Government to do everything possible to encourage and support the Cypriot people.

Ian Lavery (Wansbeck) (Lab): Cyprus is a fantastic country and I have been on delegations and holidays there, but the Turkish Government have continually ignored UN Security Council resolutions on peace. What additional pressure can the UK Government put on the Turkish Government to try to bring this dispute to an end that satisfies everyone?

Martin Vickers: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention, but I hope that it will be the Minister who will enlighten us about what additional help, support and encouragement can be given. It is entirely true that it is the Turkish Government who have seemingly been the blockage for so many years, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West said a few minutes ago, if there ever was a possibility of a settlement it seems now to be within our grasp.

Dr Murrison : Does my hon. Friend not agree that there were in fact two midwives to this situation? One, of course, was Turkey, and I support the motion and its condemnation of the actions of the Turkish Government, but there was also Greece. In 1974, Greece's militarism was very much part of destabilising Archbishop Makarios and introducing an unpleasant junta, albeit for a short period. One can perhaps have a little bit of sympathy for Turkey, and so far the debate has been rather one-sided.

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Martin Vickers: Yes, of course, it takes two parties—two to tango, as it were. Both sides must be willing to come to an agreement.

Dr Offord: Although there is some history of Turkish troops invading the island, that was 36 years ago. It is time for them to go now. Even their behaviour on our visit, when we were followed by security forces who photographed us, sought our names and determined when we were leaving and what we were doing, shows that the Turkish Government have not really changed.

Martin Vickers: Yes, there was a slightly sinister feel to some parts of our trip as a result of being followed and photographed by the Turkish authorities.

Mr George Howarth (Knowsley) (Lab): I apologise for not being present at the opening of the debate, but I had other duties elsewhere. I accept the hon. Gentleman's point that for the first time in 41 years settlement looks closer than it has, but does he not accept that in order for such a settlement to take place there must be some recognition on both sides that there have been failings on both sides before anyone can move forward?

Martin Vickers: Yes, of course. As I mentioned in response to my hon. Friend the Member for South West Wiltshire (Dr Murrison), there clearly have been failings on both sides but it takes two to come

together and reach a conclusion. That is now within our grasp and we should do everything possible to achieve it.

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr Burrowes) and his co-signatories on tabling the motion for debate. The division of Cyprus for more than 40 years is often referred to as a frozen conflict. The motion gives some sense of how long the situation has gone on for. It mentions the UN resolutions, the high-level agreements reached, and the efforts made, and as it says, all that effort was aimed at a “comprehensive settlement”—that is the phrase that is continually used—of the problem of the island’s division. The aim, as the motion says, is

“a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation with political equality”

guaranteed for the whole population of the island.

Bob Stewart: I would like to put on record that one reason why the conflict was frozen for a very long time was that the actions of so many United Nations troops on the green line stopped the conflict from breaking out again. It may have been sterile and boring for the troops, but by goodness, they have prevented people from dying.

Mr McFadden: The hon. Gentleman makes a very good point. I suppose he is gently reminding us that a frozen conflict is better than an unfrozen one, without a settlement. The frozen nature of the conflict is perhaps at its most graphic in the city of Famagusta, and specifically in Varosha, where homes, hotels and other buildings have lain dormant for 40 years, trapped in a specific moment in time. Those buildings are still standing, but year after year, they have been devoid of the people and the changes that give a city life; they are overgrown with

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vegetation, and are gradually rotting away. It is no accident that the term “ghost town” has been used to describe it, both in tonight’s debate and before it.

It is of course right that the city and its properties be returned to their rightful owners. When people left, they thought they would be able to return within days, or perhaps weeks. They have had no access to their homes, businesses and other places of real importance to them for more than 40 years. People lost their houses, land, money, and access to places of worship. It is no wonder that this enforced absence is a source of such heartbreak and sorrow to all those affected. They are right to not only hope but expect that they will be able to return. The broader question is how that happens, and the relationship to a wider settlement of Cyprus’s division and issues.

As has been mentioned several times in the debate, the omens are better than they have been for some time. Both Mr Anastasiades and Mr Akinci seem genuinely committed to a settlement, and optimism is higher than it has been for many years. The prospect for progress on this agenda seems stronger than in the past. I am sure that the whole House hopes that that applies to the wider issues, including that of Famagusta, on which we have focused tonight. The Foreign Secretary is due in Cyprus later this week. The hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate, asked the Minister a few questions; I wonder whether I might add to the list. Will the Minister tell us the Government’s agenda for that visit, and what more the UK Government can do, as a friend of Cyprus, to encourage momentum, and ultimately agreement, in the talks?

Given that the political atmosphere is more positive than it was, how does the Minister see the Government using their position as a guarantor to press for a settlement that leads to the reunification of the island, as set out in the various UN resolutions that have been adopted? Does he believe that Mr Akinci, who represents Northern Cyprus, and in whom a great deal of hope has been invested, is free to make an agreement if he wishes to? Can the Minister say more about Turkey's role in the process? That is particularly important with regard to Famagusta. It is important to mention that the frozen area of Varosha is in the hands of not the Turkish Cypriots, but the Turkish military. It is important that we consider not only the people on the island, but the Turkish military's role.

Could the Minister also say what the relationship is between this process and the issues raised tonight that are being discussed by Turkey and the European Union? Specifically, I am thinking of the huge refugee problem affecting both Turkey and the European Union, and the question of future accession to the EU. How possible is it to make progress on these other issues while the situation in Cyprus remains as it is? What is their effect on the process taking place in Cyprus?

Much has happened in recent months and days that is a cause for grief and heartbreak on the human level, and huge concern on the political level. In the statement earlier today, the House set out its views on the terrible events in Paris a few days ago. We have talked, understandably, of a generational struggle against Islamist extremism. The world has failed to find a solution to the terrible war in Syria, which has been unfolding for

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years, and which is driving much of the refugee problem facing Europe. Yet on the Cyprus issue, there are grounds for hope and optimism. Inevitably, that will be tempered with caution, given how many setbacks there have been over the years—the hon. Member for North Thanet (Sir Roger Gale) referred to having been involved in this issue for decades—but as we know from our experience, making peace is hugely dependent on leadership. Among both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, there is a leadership in place that seems committed to finding a way forward. We Labour Members will support their efforts, and we hope that the UK Government play as positive a role as possible, so that this conflict, which I have referred to as being frozen, can be resolved, and the island of Cyprus can be unified on the basis of mutual respect among all parts of its population.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr Tobias Ellwood): I congratulate the Backbench Business Committee on finding the time for this important debate. I begin by apologising for the absence of the Minister for Europe, who has an engagement away from the House. I will do my best to answer the questions from right hon. and hon. Members, but I shall certainly pass on to him any that I am unable to answer, so that he can write to hon. Members. It has been mentioned that the Foreign Secretary will visit Cyprus this week, so this debate is fortuitous.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr Burrowes) on securing this important debate at this time. Cyprus is not in my brief—I deal with the middle east and north Africa most of the time—but it is a country with which I am very familiar. I served there as an officer with the Royal Green Jackets. I remember my old stomping grounds of Nicosia, Larnaca and Paphos; I have been up to the panhandle and Bellapais monastery in Kyrenia. It is a truly beautiful country, steeped in history. We have gone back to when it gained independence, but of course it has a place in Greek mythology as the birthplace of Aphrodite and Adonis. The sculptor Pygmalion also came

from there. It is truly a remarkable place. I have very fond memories of it. It is where I learned to fly, as a pilot, and where I learned to parachute. It is a place associated with fun and enjoyment, but there is a serious element to it, which has been highlighted today. Back when I was there, in the 1990s, two other protagonists were taking up the debate: Denktas and Clerides, the two leaders of the day. They were debating the very same matters that we are. There is a sense of frustration, which has been aired by right hon. and hon. Members, about how long it has taken to resolve the issue in an important part of Europe.

My hon. Friend mentioned the British interest. Britain has an historical interest, a commercial interest, including culture and tourism, and a security interest because of the sovereign bases where I had the honour to serve. The RAF, and the role that it is playing, not least in the current challenges in the middle east, have been mentioned. We have an important strategic relationship with the country. My hon. Friend mentioned the letter that he had received from our Prime Minister on his commitment to a bicameral solution, supporting UN resolutions 550 and 789, and working towards that important comprehensive settlement.

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Mr George Howarth: Does the Minister agree that in order to make progress on that proposal, it is necessary to recognise that there are legitimate grievances on the side of the Northern Cypriots that must be addressed if they are to feel comfortable with such a settlement?

Mr Ellwood: As I make progress, I will come on to those grievances and the role that Britain can play.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon (Dr Offord) commented on the empty beaches that he saw on the visit—it sounds like quite an amazing visit—that he and other hon. Members made, and the enormous potential for tourism to fill those beaches. That is exactly what all sides want. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess) did not want to dwell on the past. He wanted to look at the future, but we must learn from the past and also stress the importance of trade. I was about to say lots of nice things about the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West), but I see that she is not in her place. Although she has not been to Cyprus—she was not on that visit—she clearly has a major diaspora in her constituency. By coming today, she is representing her constituents well. She mentioned an older generation of Cypriots still waiting for a solution and said how frustrating the situation is for them. We hope we will make progress.

I welcome my hon. Friend the Member for North Thanet (Sir Roger Gale) to his new role. He has some big shoes to fill, if I may say so politely. He stressed that there is a window of opportunity. My hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate talked about the stars being aligned. If I may correct him, I think it is the planets, rather than the stars, that are aligned. Nevertheless, the moment is before us. That is why it is pertinent that the Foreign Secretary will visit Cyprus in the near future.

Mr Burrowes: I was repeating what the Foreign Secretary said in the House. He was, no doubt deliberately, using the same phrase as was used ahead of the Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland, to make the point that we are on the cusp of another historic agreement.

Mr Ellwood: I agree. I hope that is right. That is why the visit of the Foreign Secretary this week is so pertinent. I am sure he will read *Hansard* to make sure that he is fully aware of what has been said in the House today.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cleethorpes (Martin Vickers) asked what purpose the division continues to serve. I agree—it serves no purpose whatever. Everybody will benefit from a solution.

I welcome the support expressed in the motion for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem. Cyprus has been divided for too long. Under the courageous leadership of President Anastasiades and Mr Akinci we may now have an opportunity to secure a just and lasting settlement. I can assure the House that the UK will remain a strong supporter of the two communities' efforts to secure a settlement. We will do whatever we can to help them reunite Cyprus.

Ian Lavery: I understand what the Minister said earlier about others in the Department having more expertise on Cyprus than he might have, but can he say what powers the UK Government have as a guarantor power of Cyprus?

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Mr Ellwood: The hon. Gentleman needs to allow me to develop my argument. I will come to the role that Britain seeks to play in the important task of finding a solution.

A lasting settlement would have clear benefits for Cyprus, for the region and for the UK. Some 80,000 British nationals live in Cyprus, and 900,000 visit every year. A reunited Cyprus would unlock significant economic benefits through increased opportunities for trade, investment and tourism, including tourism to the Varosha area of Famagusta. The respected Peace Research Institute Oslo forecast that the peace dividend from a Cyprus settlement would amount to €20 billion over the next 20 years, and it would add, on average, 2.8% GDP growth in real terms every year. Those figures alone make a powerful case for the importance of securing a settlement.

Beyond the economic benefits, a settlement in Cyprus would help to advance regional stability. Cyprus is already a beacon of stability in a challenging region, and a settlement would reinforce the island's security. It would open up the possibility of new energy and economic partnerships in the region, and bring new momentum to Turkey's EU accession process. In all these areas there are opportunities for the United Kingdom.

It is clear that Turkey remains an important part of reaching a solution. We welcome Turkey's support for a settlement, and public statements on that from President Erdogan and Prime Minister Davutoglu have been important in building support for a settlement. Turkey's recent agreement to give the committee for missing persons in Cyprus access to 30 sites controlled by the Turkish military, which was mentioned by hon. Members, was a very helpful step. We welcome the positive response from the Republic of Cyprus to that and hope that the parties can build on this to generate even more confidence in the settlement process.

Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind): I have listened intently to the debate, which of course stirs memories of the past in Northern Ireland. I would like to make a suggestion to the Minister. The IRA murdered and disappeared a number of people 30 or 40 years ago. A very distinguished forensics expert has helped identify some of the remains of the disappeared—they have not all been found, sadly—and also helped in Bosnia. Will the Government please make a point of involving that very distinguished lady forensics expert in identifying those found in graves in Cyprus?

Mr Ellwood: The hon. Lady makes an important point about the reconciliation and her words are now on the record. I am sure I will have discussions with the Europe Minister about the matter. I am pleased to say that progress has been made on it, as has been mentioned by other hon. Members.

Securing a sustainable Cyprus settlement remains important internationally and regionally, given the opportunities and security threats, but above all for the people of Cyprus, who stand to gain most from the social, economic and security benefits that a lasting settlement would bring. The UK remains firmly focused on supporting the people of the island to find a solution. Our approach has three elements. First, we maintain strong links in Cyprus with both communities. We strongly support the efforts of President Anastasiades and Mr Akinci to reach a lasting settlement through the

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UN-led negotiations. As the Foreign Secretary, who will be visiting Cyprus this week, confirmed to the House in June, the UK has made a generous offer to cede nearly half of the territory of the sovereign base areas to Cyprus in the event of a settlement.

Bob Stewart: May I place on the record the immense help the sovereign base areas have provided over 40 years to maintain stability? The Turkish troops were stopped by the sovereign base area when the invasion occurred in 1974. We are ceding back land to the Republic of Cyprus. Those two areas of British territory provide huge stability to the island in security terms.

Mr Ellwood: Following independence, the sovereign base areas have played an important part in the history of the country and they continue to do so. I am pleased that we are using them as a method of encouraging a settlement.

We support practical initiatives to build trust between the communities, notably through our support for the excellent work of the bi-communal chambers of commerce. The Minister for Europe was very pleased to host an event at the Foreign Office in March that enabled the chambers to highlight the value of bi-communal work and the economic benefits of a settlement.

At the regional level, we discuss with the other guarantor powers, Turkey and Greece, how best to support a solution. On the question of security and guarantees, our position is clear: we are not seeking a specific role for the UK. Rather, we are ready to consider whatever arrangements the sides can agree to enable their communities to feel secure. Finally, we engage with other international partners, including through the EU and the UN, to encourage them to support the efforts of the President and Mr Akinci. As the Foreign Secretary has made clear, the UK will continue to do all it can to help the sides reunite their island.

On the specific issue of Famagusta, I understand the strength of feeling about Varosha. The present state of Varosha reflects the consequences of the continued division of Cyprus. We fully support all relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 550 from 1984 and 789 from 1992. We have raised this issue with the Turkish Cypriots and the Turkish authorities. The Government remain convinced that, ultimately, a comprehensive settlement is the best chance of resolving these complex issues. We will remain focused on supporting the efforts of the two leaders to secure a settlement.

In conclusion, this debate has underlined the depth of the ties between the United Kingdom and Cyprus. It has demonstrated that it is in the UK's national interest to help the Cypriots reach a

lasting settlement. That will require bold decisions from both communities in the weeks and months ahead. The President and Mr Akinci have demonstrated that they can provide the strong and determined leadership required to secure a historic agreement. The Government are cautiously optimistic that a solution may be within reach. Certainly, many people think that there is now a chance, the like of which has not been seen for decades. We urge both sides to seize this opportunity. Cypriots of both communities want to live and prosper together in peace. As they

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strive for a lasting solution, we will continue our active support in Cyprus, Ankara, Athens, Brussels, New York and beyond.

I am grateful to the Backbench Business Committee for making time for this debate and giving us the opportunity to discuss these important issues.

Mr Burrowes: I thank all hon. Members who have contributed to this important and timely debate. I thank the shadow Minister and the Minister for their broad support for the principles behind the motion and the powerful case for a comprehensive settlement, which would bring economic benefits, as the Minister said, and regional stability. We must bring in other partnerships and use the momentum that is there through the work of Mustafa Akinci and Nicos Anastasiades. We must give them support, which the motion does.

We have heard many voices in this debate. Seven Members—my hon. Friends the Members for Gower (Byron Davies), for South West Wiltshire (Dr Murrison), for South East Cornwall (Mrs Murray) and for Beckenham (Bob Stewart), the right hon. Member for Knowsley (Mr Howarth) and the hon. Members for Bolton South East (Yasmin Qureshi) and for Wansbeck (Ian Lavery)—have shown their support for the motion.

Five other Members have spoken. The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West) felt left out from the delegation; it was a Conservative Friends of Cyprus delegation, but she is welcome to apply. Perhaps she could join the all-party group under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for North Thanet (Sir Roger Gale), who spoke about the generational problem and the hope that Mustafa Akinci has the skills to work with Nicos Anastasiades to make the most of the best chance for decades.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon (Dr Offord) said that international law should be applied equally everywhere, whether in Israel or Cyprus. He said that we must never forget the important issue of justice that must be dealt with. The motion seeks to do that. My hon. Friend the Member for Cleethorpes (Martin Vickers) mentioned the old Nicosia airport, which is a horrifying example of the scar of division and occupation. We must do more on that. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess) said that he had heard it all before, but that the motion would allow us to take things a stage further. That is the case.

Some 40,000 Famagustans, many of whom are in the Gallery, fled their homes after the relentless bombardment. They had to leave Famagusta to be looted and left empty to decay. I have been given a set of photographs showing its former glory, which we must work hard to see returned. Those people have had a long wait for justice.

We had UN Security Council resolutions 550 in 1984 and 789 in 1992. There have been various proposals by the various leaders of the communities and there have been negotiations. There have

been petitions—not least the one from 50,000 Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots that forms the basis of this debate. There was a European Union declaration. Now, we will have a resolution of this House, which I hope will receive unanimous support, that speaks of the return of Famagusta and supports a comprehensive settlement. We want to ensure that this is the last time we need such a debate and resolution, and that we reach a settlement that is for the good of all Cypriots.

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Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House supports the comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem based on a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation with political equality, as set out in the relevant Security Council Resolutions and the High Level Agreements; endorses the Declaration of the European Parliament of 14 February 2012 on the return of Famagusta to its lawful inhabitants; notes that the city of Famagusta in the Republic of Cyprus was captured by the invading Turkish forces in August 1974, that a section of Famagusta was then sealed off and remains uninhabited, under the direct control of the Turkish military, and that the return of Famagusta to its lawful inhabitants would facilitate efforts toward a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem; further notes the 1979 High Level Agreement and UN Security Council Resolutions 550 (1984) and 789 (1992) and the 2008 Report of the Committee on Petitions of the European Parliament on Petition 733/2004; calls on the government of Turkey to act according to those UN Security Council Resolutions and Report Recommendations and return Famagusta to its lawful inhabitants, who must resettle under conditions of security and peace; urges the Government, as a guarantor power of Cyprus, to promote Turkey's cooperation; and directs the Speaker to forward this Resolution to President Nicos Anastasiades, Mr Mustafa Akinci, the UN Secretary General and the government of Turkey.

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