

Strengthening Cyprus's defence industry

Address by the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr Nikos Christodoulides, at the opening of the 2nd International Defence and Security Conference "BATTLEFIELD ReDEFINED 2024"

It is with great pleasure that I address you today at the opening of the 2nd International Defence and Security Conference "BATTLEFIELD ReDEFINED 2024." This two-day conference serves as a platform to explore the pivotal role of the defence industry in shaping the future security, stability, and prosperity of our country, our region, and Europe as a whole. At the same time, this Conference presents an excellent opportunity to celebrate the achievements of the Cyprus defence industry.

The ongoing war in Ukraine along with regional conflicts in the greater Middle East underscore the inherent fragility of peace and the critical importance of preparedness. They serve as a reminder that vigilance and the advancement of defence capabilities are indispensable for the preservation of peace and stability.

At the same time, with its own historical experience of the 1974 invasion and the ongoing occupation by Turkey for 50 years now, the Republic of Cyprus profoundly

appreciates the critical role of the defence industry in safeguarding stability, addressing hybrid threats, and bolstering our nation's role within regional and European security frameworks.

It is for this reason, but also having in mind Cyprus' membership to the European Union (EU) and the fact that we are located in a region of great geopolitical importance and uncertainty, that investment in this sector is not just a duty but a strategic imperative.

I am very pleased to note that, over the last five years, the Cyprus defence industry has demonstrated extraordinary growth and resilience, emerging as a key pillar of our national strategy. More specifically, 16 Cypriot companies, with the support of the Ministry of Defence, have secured participation in 37 different contracts of the European Defence Industrial Development Programme, as well as of the European Defence Fund. Contracts with a total budget of approximately €435 million for developing new generation European defence systems. This involvement has equipped our defence industry with advanced infrastructure and specialised expertise, establishing the Republic of Cyprus as a reliable co-producer in Europe's defence systems supply chain.

My vision, our vision, is to transform the Republic of Cyprus from a consumer of defence products into a producer that actively contributes to shaping the European defence landscape through innovation, the development of cutting-edge technologies, and the production of high-quality defence systems.

To realise this vision, our government is implementing a series of targeted measures to further support and strengthen, in action, not just words, our defence industry. In this context, I would like to announce today:

1) The preparation of the legislation to institutionalise the high-tech defence industry aiming to strengthen national defence and stimulate economic growth.

2) The institutionalisation of Industrial Collaboration Defence Programmes: We are proceeding with the establishment of a formal framework that mandates the involvement of Cypriot defence companies in armament contracts.

This approach facilitates technology transfer, enhances self-sufficiency, and strengthens the capabilities of our defence industry. I am pleased to announce today that for the first time since the founding of the Republic of Cyprus, our government, through the Ministry of Defence, officially requested the French Defence Ministry, the involvement of the Cyprus Defence Industry



in future armament contracts with French companies.

3) The establishment of the Defence Research, Technology, and Industry Council: This advisory body will offer strategic recommendations to the Presidency, ensuring that defence research, technological innovation, and industrial participation will always be central to the planning and development of our defence capabilities. The Council will have a crucial role in shaping our national defence strategies, fostering collaboration with the Cypriot defence industry, and promoting investments in domestic defence technologies and production. The Council will be consisted by the following members:

- The Chairman of the Council, who will be the Minister of Defence.
- The Directors of the sectors for defence systems, research and innovation, and the development of defence industry.
- A representative from the Board of Directors of the Cyprus Association of Research and Innovation Enterprises, a representative from the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and a representative from the Federation of Employers and Industrialists.
- Two individuals from Cypriot academic institutions or centres of excellence with relevant experience in collaborating with the defence industry.

4) The establishment of the National Registry of Defence Industry Manufacturers in collaboration with the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The National Registry will be the official catalogue that includes all Cypriot manufacturers authorised to design and manufacture defence products in compliance with established standards.

5) Increase of the funding allocated for Defence Research and Development to support the Ministry's

Research and Development programs and to further promote the participation of our industry into European defence programs.

6) The funding from the government of the Republic of Cyprus for National Pavilions at major international defence exhibitions annually, in order to bolster the international presence of the Cypriot defence industry.

I am very pleased to announce that this initiative is already in effect, with Cyprus participating with a National Pavilion in DEFEA (Defence Exhibition) 2025 in Athens.

The implementation of the above-mentioned measures has a specific strategic aim: to transform our defence industry, positioning Cyprus as a hub for advanced defence technologies, and to empower our country to provide a meaningful and valuable contribution to Europe's collective security framework. At the same time, this sector will also generate significant economic benefits, reinforcing our national resilience and creating opportunities for growth in other sectors.

In closing, allow me to express once again my pleasure for addressing today's event. This Conference stands as a testament to the collaboration and foresight of key stakeholders who recognise the importance of the defence industry to our national interests.

Therefore, I would like to convey my deepest appreciation to the Cyprus Association of Research and Innovation Enterprises for their initiative and dedication to promoting the Cyprus Defence Industry in collaboration with the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce. I would also like to acknowledge the invaluable support of the Ministry of Defence; under whose auspices this Conference is being held.

Thank you for your presence and your commitment to this critical cause, to this priority for the Republic of Cyprus.

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