

Cyprus

I gave a very high priority to Cyprus and I decided that on 9 May 2002, on Europe Day, the place I should be was Cyprus. We planned that visit with meticulous attention to detail. I wanted to bring to Cyprus the message of Robert Schuman from that famous speech of 9 May 1950, 'la réconciliation créatrice' (creative reconciliation), and I wanted to bring that message to this last divided city in Europe. The Berlin Wall was gone but the Green Zone that divides Nicosia is still there. I brought my message of Schuman's creative reconciliation to both parties and worked hugely behind the scenes on this question, including in Copenhagen. I arranged a very lengthy tête-à-tête with the then Prime Minister of Turkey, Mr Abdullah Gül, who is now the President, and with his Foreign Minister Mr Yakış, to discuss the Cypriot question at the stage when we were looking at the enlargement. I had lots of meetings with President Clerides on the Cypriot side and with Mr Denktash on the Turkish side.

In the end, in my view, the idea of Annan, a so-called bi-zonal, bi-federal solution, is the solution that will come to pass one day. I think it is deeply to be regretted that the opportunity was lost. I have a particular image in my mind of taking a tour of the Green Zone in the centre of Nicosia, which is closed off, where there are little restaurants in the street, and just in the shade in the front of a restaurant you have all the dust that has collected since 1974. There was a real chance to sweep that clean in 2004 and instead they chose to leave it there and it falls to another generation to clean it up. I think it was a huge lost opportunity and I deeply regret the outcome of what happened.