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Speech by the General Secretary of EDON Christos Christofias at the 31st Pancyprian Festival of Youth and Students of EDON

4 July 2018, Nicosia

The 31st Pancyprian Festival of Youth and Students is here!

We welcome you all!

Each year we make an appointment to remind everyone that this section of our society does exist: the young generation who don't compromise. The young people who are struggling for life and freedom without yielding. We, who know that to move forward a lot of struggle is needed. We propose our own cultural alternative proposal. We are the ones who have as our shield the faith in the just cause of our struggle and organized class struggle as our spear.

This is the youth of EDON!

In this context, people of culture and the arts firmly declare their participation in this youth celebration. They do so because they know that where this system's limits end which gives birth and reproduces exploitation, that's where the youth, students and workers begin who are filled with the flame of the revolutionary struggle for another society. It's the same faith conveyed by the poems of our great poets, Tefkros Anthias and Theodosios Pierides, with this year marking 50 years since their passing away. It is precisely this belief in the struggle for freedom and social justice that inspired them in their enormous work whose legacy accompanies us in our daily struggles at the workplace, in universities, schools and life in general.

We therefore thank them. We thank Thanos Mikroutsikos, who despite the difficulties he is facing did not turn down not even now our invitation to participate for yet another year in our Festival. Together with Christos Thiveos and Rita Antonopoulou, they will take us beyond the 'lines of the Horizon'. We thank Vasilis Papakonstantinou and Lavrentis Macheritsas. We thank Yiannis Kotsiras, Dimitris Bassis, Yiota Nega and Miltos Paschalides, who with their musical tribute to Marios Tokas will honor our great Cypriot composer who died 10 years ago in the best possible way.

It would be an omission on our part, not to thank the hundreds of people in the cultural field, both professionals and amateurs, musicians, dancers, actors, artists, traditional craftsmen, who will cultivate the education of our souls, entertain us, exalting our spirit during these three days. Together with the hundreds of volunteers, without whom it would not be possible to build



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and construct this small town, with its four main stages, theme centres, youth clubs, bookstores, a children's playground and so many other things. Joining us, as always, will be many foreign delegations from our fraternal organizations from abroad, as well as our Turkish Cypriot compatriot fellow-fighters.

We are proud of the people of culture who do not yield and surrender in the harsh conditions created by the capitalist crisis and, moreover, the anti-social policy of the Anastasiades government. An insensitive and destructive government. A government that allocates just 0.2% of the state budget to culture, to the people of the arts and letters of our country. The same government, which is playing games with the fate of our people in all areas solely to satisfy their ideological obsessions and the powerful interests of the ruling class.

How else can we explain their dangerous stand towards US-NATO Imperialism and the European Union – the very same forces which continue to massacre the peoples of the world, especially our neighbors in Syria and Palestine? They have never protested about the use of British bases in military operations against Syria, which have transformed Cyprus into a launching pad and an unsinkable aircraft carrier of the blood-stained Imperialists. On the contrary, they continue to flirt with putting Cyprus under NATO control. That's to say with the very initiators of the destruction of our country. We will not stop declaring that our people have nothing to gain from our country's participation in war-mongering military alliances. It will not gain anything but will just suffer. NATO has no place whatsoever in Cyprus, nor Cyprus in NATO.

How else can someone explain the turn on the Cyprus problem and the statements made by President Anastasiades suggesting that in the future we may even have to think about the solution of two independent states instead of the solution of Bizonal, Bicomunal Federation? They cannot continue shifting the debate and avoid assuming their own share of the responsibility for the deadlock in the negotiations for a long time. The only patriotic choice is the acceptance of the UN Secretary-General's framework, without terms and preconditions, with the continuation of negotiations from where they had remained one year ago. By doing so, we will either be led to the desired solution that will liberate and reunify Cyprus or it will be clear to everyone that the sole responsibility for the impasse will lie with Turkey, the occupying power

They already bear huge responsibilities for the nationalist turn of sections of our people that can only be a bad omen for the future of our divided country. With their stand, the President of the Republic and his associates, who declare that they share common principles and values with the "Golden Dawn" party, they are strengthening the fascists of ELAM. They give ground to demagoguery and the populism of neo-fascism that promote the idea that our Turkish



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Cypriot compatriots or foreign refugees and migrants are to blame for all of our problems, that they are taking our jobs away, as they say.

In the same way they are selling-off public wealth and property, but also our people's gains. How else does one explain the well-planned sell-off of Cyprus Airways, the port of Limassol and recently of the Co-op Bank? While they promised the people that the Co-op would return to the hands of its owners, that is, the people, they sold it out by loading their debts back on the people's backs. They themselves are the same forces who with their machinations and actions led things to this situation.

They are the same ones who have led hospitals to destruction, leading education to a more conservative shift in policy of imposing multiple exams and sterile grade-oriented knowledge. They are the same ones who have transformed public life into an endless "jobs for the boys" policy for their own followers, turning the state machine into a tool of the ruling DISY party, and by doing so justifying the prevailing perception among the youth who avert political engagement and thus strengthening the most reactionary circles of society.

In this dangerous turn of events, the parties of the so-called centre spectrum – who are anything but centre - also bear responsibilities. In many cases, they have proved to be the best ally of the government in the right-wing turn of a big part of our society.

But as long as they eat with golden spoons on the backs of our people, the more must we be determined, drawing lessons from our past to build the future. Two hundred years ago, Karl Marx was born, who, along with Engels, showed the way to the oppressed of the whole world. They have provided us with the tools we need to analyze dialectically phenomena, the ability to know the limits of the system that reproduces human exploitation, but also the perspective of breaking our chains for the new society. A hundred and fifty years ago, with the "Communist Manifesto" they made the beginning.

The fierce 1948 worker's strikes in Cyprus charted, which we celebrate the 70th anniversary, were waged on this same path. The movement of educational, cultural and sports' local clubs that flourished in the same year all over Cyprus, which contributed to the enlightenment of thousands of uneducated and oppressed workers and young people, were on this same path. Comrade Ezekias Papaioannou, one of the historic leaders of honored AKEL also marched on this path, this year marking 110 years since his birth and 30 years since his death.



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We are also marching on the same path, seeking to be worthy of our historical mission with the certainty that "people who fight for an idea, for life and for freedom do not kneel".

We unwaveringly continue the struggle until victory.

Long live the 31st Pancyprian Festival of Youth and Students!

Long live EDON!

Long live our Cyprus!