



Briefs & Updates

Obasanjo's candidates win leadership of Nigerian National Assembly

On June 3, following the April 12 general elections in Nigeria, the two houses of the Nigerian Congress chose their new leaders. Adolphus Wabara was chosen by the Nigerian Senate as its President and Aminu Masari was chosen as leader of the Nigerian House of Representatives after a three-way race, reported *This Day* (Lagos) on June 4. Both Wabara and Masari are members of President Obasanjo's party, the People's Democratic Party.

After the Nigerian elections last spring, the South-West of Nigeria returned a majority of Obasanjo supporters to the Senate. This was a major shift from the 1999 election results, in which 17 of the 18 senators elected from the region were members of the Alliance for Democracy, a party opposed to Obasanjo.

In the House of Representatives, a three-way race among Lawan Farouk, Dr. Usman Bugaje and Alhaji Masari turned into a two-man contest between Bugaje and Masari. The victory of Masari was attributed to "forces loyal to President Olusegun Obasanjo" according to the Nigerian news magazine *Vanguard* of Friday, June 6.

EU heads approve draft of a European constitution

Twenty-five European heads of state, meeting in Salonika, Greece, approved the draft of a constitution for the European Union on June 20. The 15 heads of state of current EU members and 10 heads of state of future members all approved the text in principle. The idea of a constitution for the EU has been a hot topic for some time (See "Is Europe heading toward a federal constitution?", by Uwe Leonardy, *Federations* Vol. 1, No. 5, Summer 2001).

On May 28, *The Guardian* in the UK viewed the most important features of the draft as these provisions:

- a long-term EU president to replace the current rotating presidency
- creation of an EU foreign minister
- expanding the EU commission from 15 to 25 members
- a Euro defence force
- tax harmonization
- a charter of fundamental rights
- an EU prosecutor
- allowing the EU to sign treaties

Letter from the Cyprus Embassy in Washington, D.C. USA

June 2, 2003

To the Editor:

With reference to your brief article on Cyprus in the most recent issue (May, 2003) of *Federations*, ("Cyprus federation proposal rejected; EU membership approved"), I regret to say that what you mention about the UN Secretary General's plan is completely inaccurate.

As described exhaustively in the UN Secretary General's Report to the Security Council (S/2003/398 of 1 April 2003), the prime responsibility for the failure of Kofi Annan's effort rests with the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mr. Rauf Denktash, who flatly rejected a proposed referendum on the Annan plan. Mr. Denktash's negative attitude was also regretted by the UN Security Council in its Resolution 1475 of April 14, 2003.

In contrast, the UN Secretary General commended the co-operation and flexibility of the Greek Cypriot side throughout the process and especially President Papadopoulos' positive response on the issue of submitting the plan to a referendum.

Yours sincerely,

Erato Kozakou Marcoullis
Ambassador of Cyprus
Embassy of Cyprus
Washington, D.C.
United States of America



Ambassador Marcoullis

Gay marriage legal, Canadian court decides

After an appeals court in the Province of Ontario decided that marriage should not be denied to gays and lesbians, the Canadian federal government announced on June 17 that it would not appeal this decision to the Canadian Supreme Court, the *Globe and Mail* reported on June 18. Instead, there will be federal legislation drafted to formalize gay marriage soon, said Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, adding that there will be a "free vote" (without party-enforced discipline) on the legislation when it comes before the House of Commons. And all Canadian provinces except Alberta said they would be willing to co-operate in marrying gays and lesbians. In Canada, the Canada Marriage Act is federal legislation, but the provinces issue all the marriage licences. In the mean time, the Ontario court decision stated that gay couples could marry immediately and more than 100 gay and lesbian couples in the province have done so. Canada became the third country in the world in which gay marriages were legal, following Netherlands and Belgium. ☺

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