

Cyprus Calls Medvedev's Visit Historic

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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NICOSIA, Cyprus — President Dmitry Medvedev's first-ever visit to ethnically divided Cyprus will be a "historic" event underscoring the two countries' very close ties, the island's president said Wednesday.

Medvedev's visit will also help boost slow-moving talks aimed at reunifying the east Mediterranean island, Dimitris Christofias said.

The Cyprus Republic was split into an internationally recognized Greek Cypriot south and a breakaway Turkish Cypriot north in 1974 when Turkey invaded the island after a coup by supporters of union with Greece. Two years of negotiations between Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Dervis Eroglu, as well as Eroglu's predecessor Mehmet Ali Talat, have produced only limited progress.

"[The visit] will mean much for the Cyprus issue, but also for the existence of the Cyprus Republic, which will be stressed repeatedly," Christofias told reporters. The Greek Cypriot government has long counted on Russian backing in past failed peace efforts. Bilateral ties

have strengthened during the tenure of Christofias, a Soviet-educated former leader of the island's communist-rooted party.

Christofias paid an official state visit to Moscow eight months after his February 2008 election. Revenue from Russian vacationers has also helped buoy the tourism-reliant Cypriot economy amid the economic crisis. Statistics show an 80 percent jump in Russian tourist arrivals to the island in August relative to the same month last year.

Cypriot Foreign Minister Markos Kyprianou cited Russian figures showing that overall investment from Cyprus to Russia until 2008 amounted to \$57.6 billion while Russian investment to Cyprus reached \$16 billion. During the Russian president's visit, 13 agreements will be signed aimed at boosting bilateral commerce, investment and tourism, including a key accord abolishing double taxation between the two countries. Medvedev was to arrive in Cyprus at midnight Wednesday and depart late Thursday.

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