

[32] Five disabled athletes to attempt swim across Aegean

Athens, 16/09/2003 (ANA)

Five athletes with a disability and two swimmers/coaches on Saturday will attempt to swim across the Aegean, as they will disembark from Cape Sounion, in the extreme southeastern portion of Attica prefecture, in an effort to reach the Cyclades island of Milos in five days.

Intermediate stops will be the other Cyclades islands of Kythnos, Serifos, Sifnos and Kimolos.

The audacious project is has been dubbed “Aegeathlon”, from the Greek word “athlos”, which means an extraordinary achievement. The initiative supported by the Athens 2004 Organizing Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The crossing comes exactly one year before the Paralympic Games of 2004 (Sept. 17–28, 2004) are hosted in Athens. The aim of the project is to better inform and inspire the public about Paralympic athletes’ potential and their achievements. It also aims to promote the Aegean islands’ unsurpassed beauty and culture.

The distance between Cape Sounion – long associated with the ancient temple of Poseidon -- and Milos is 145 km (78 nautical miles). However, depending on weather and sea conditions during the relay, athletes may swim 160 to 170 km (85 – 92 nautical miles).

Athletes are expected to set off early in the morning and swim continuously, one after the other, until they reach their next destination, and without the use of artificial limbs or swimming aids, such as flippers. Experienced escorts will be nearby on boats, while a medical team will also monitor the athletes during the relay.

Participating Athletes include Constantinos Fykas (Paralympic gold medalist in Sydney 2000), Marianna Bratsalia, Giannis Chatzibeis, Sakis Kostaris and Nikos Paterakis. George Mathas, the first Greek to officially cross the English Channel, and Petros Tsiallas, a champion long-distance swimming, will join them.

“Aegeathlon” is sponsored by the Yacht Club of Greece (NOE), GM Yachting and Adidas.

A press conference will be held at the premises of the Yacht Club in Microlimano, Piraeus, on Thursday at 12:30pm.

For more information, call Antonios Rellas at (+30) 6977.20.22.16 or send a fax to (+30) 210.68.28.755. A relevant website is at www.aegeathlon.com, email to

info@aegeathlon.com

[33] President Papadopoulos in Athens to hold talks with Simitis

LARNACA, 16/09/2003 (CNA/ANA)

The Annan peace plan needs amendments in order to become more functional and viable and this is generally accepted, President of the Republic Tassos Papadopoulos stated here Monday on his departure to the Greek capital.

In Athens, President Papadopoulos will hold talks with Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis and his aides and will meet with President of the Hellenic Republic Kostas Stephanopoulos, President of the Greek Parliament Apostolos Kaklamanis and leader of the opposition New Democracy Party Costas Karamanlis.

Regarding his meeting Tuesday with Greek Premier Costas Simitis, the president said that it falls within the framework of the usual meetings, "aiming to achieve the best possible coordination of our policy".

"It is generally accepted that the Annan peace plan needs amendments in order to become more functional and viable. This is the stance of the Greek Cypriot side and it is gaining broad support", President Papadopoulos said.

He added that for the past five months the Greek Cypriot side has been continuously "assessing and evaluating the plan".

Invited to comment on press reports regarding new proposals by Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash on the issue of the closed part of Famagusta, the President of the Republic said that Denktash's declarations "do not persuade anyone", especially because they are made a few months before the so called elections in the Turkish occupied north.

He reassured that the government is ready to deal with any declarations made by Denktash, if the latter, "as he is obliged to, persuades Turkey to free the town of Famagusta and return it to its legitimate residents".

"This would be welcomed by us", the president said, adding that Famagusta is under the control of Turkish military and not under Denktash.

Regarding the European Parliament elections, to take place in June 2004, President Papadopoulos said that according to the EU, Cyprus, as a whole, is a single electoral area and he reiterated the government's position that as many Turkish Cypriots as possible must vote.