

Address by His Excellency, the Speaker of the House of Representatives,

Mr Yiannakis L. Omirou

At the 48th COSAC Conference 2012, at 09.15

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to have an opportunity to be here among you today and declare the opening of the 48th COSAC Conference. I welcome you all warmly to Cyprus once again, and wish you a pleasant stay and a successful conclusion to the proceedings of your Conference.

The House of Representatives, as the parliament of a small EU member state, is making every effort to organise with success all the meetings in the framework of the parliamentary dimension of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union. So far the following meetings have taken place – I believe with success – the COSAC Chairpersons' Meeting, the first Meeting of the Inter-parliamentary Conference on the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy, and the Meeting of the Chairpersons the Parliamentary Committees of House Standing Committees on Internal Affairs. Four more conferences will be held before the end of the Cyprus Presidency, as well as the Meeting of Directors General and the Conference of the Speakers of the EU Parliaments during the early months of 2013.

The importance of the work performed in the framework of the COSAC Conference is known to us all. Without wishing to downplay the work done in the context of the other inter-parliamentary conferences organised by each Presidency, the COSAC Conference is perhaps the most important which the national parliaments are called on to organise, not only from the point of view of the number of participants, but also in connection with the work conducted there. Indicative of the importance of this meeting is the fact that it is the only Conference which is mentioned in the actual text of the Treaty of Lisbon. At the same time, it is also charged with the vitally important role of channelling the voice of the national parliaments towards the EU institutions, not only in connection with matters of subsidiarity, but also for issues relating to the substantive operation of the Union and the decision-making process. Today and tomorrow you will have an opportunity to be informed and exchange

views on important European issues, such as the Priorities of the Cyprus Presidency, Developments in the EU and other important matters such as Energy and Supply Security, the Single Market and Governance, as well as the vital issue of 'Strategy Europe 2020' – Recovery from the Crisis.

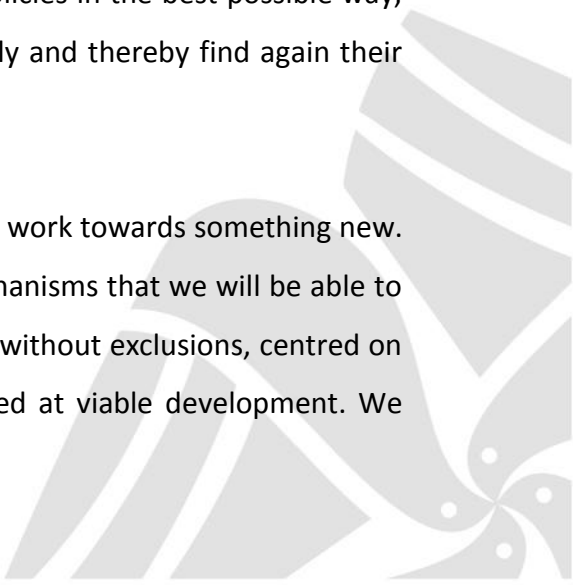
Deputy Europe Minister, Mr Mavroyiannis will also be present in order to brief you in detail on the progress of the various items on the agenda of the Cyprus Presidency.

I would, however, like to point out that the challenges for the Cyprus Republic are many and serious, given the crisis in the economic sector for all EU member states, as well as the on-going developments in the Arab Spring nations, which are leading to widespread instability in the regions surrounding the southern part of the Union.

The Priorities set by the Cyprus Presidency for this six month period, place each EU citizen at the centre of all Union policies which aim at creating a just, safe and prosperous society for European citizens. The aim of the Cyprus Presidency is to create a viable Europe, with state economies based on development; a Europe of solidarity, cohesion and effectiveness.

Some might claim that the goals set are too ambitious given the difficult period which the EU member states are currently experiencing. The European Union is at a critical point in its history: a time of financial, economic, and social crisis, but also a crisis of confidence of its citizens towards the laws and institutions of the EU and towards their national governments. Both the governments and we as parliamentarians must make coordinated efforts to seek the deeper causes which have led the Union to its current state. The emergence from the crisis cannot be achieved by one nation alone. It is only through collective efforts and without mutual suspicion that we will be able to reform the Union's policies in the best possible way, so that the member states will be able to recover economically and thereby find again their social equilibrium and cohesion.

We need solutions and we cannot use the means of the past to work towards something new. It is only with new ideas and by the use of more effective mechanisms that we will be able to set the EU once again on a course of sustainable development without exclusions, centred on fiscal consolidation and the revitalisation of investments aimed at viable development. We



must once again set the EU's greatest achievement: its single currency, on a course that will free it from the structural problems it faces. It is, however, certain that the policies of unilateral austerity and strict fiscal discipline cannot halt the recession currently experienced by Europe.

Before closing, I wish to point out, as well, that the procedures for the Cyprus Presidency and the Cyprus problem are two separate but parallel procedures. The small island of Cyprus, a large part of which is under the occupation of a country which is desirous of joining the European family, is in a position to know the value of peace very well and has experienced at first hand what it means to have the human rights of its people flagrantly violated. As a Cypriot and as the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union for this six month period, we are staunch supporters of political union which the EU aspires to achieve, through the reinforcement of the fundamental rights on which the European edifice is founded. In other words, respect for basic values, the rule of law and democracy. I wish to assure you that the Cyprus Republic is working tirelessly for the achievement of a just and viable solution to the Cyprus problem, in accordance with international law, the relevant UN resolutions and European law.

In this struggle we expect the more active support and solidarity of the Union, as well as each and every one of our partners, so that Cyprus can be re-unified for the good of all its people and so that the European Union can maintain its credibility in the promotion of the principles of the rule of law and its values, without discrimination or exceptions.

In closing, I would like once again to wish you all a constructive and successful Conference and a pleasant stay in Cyprus.

X.Π./2012.10.10

