

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC MR DEMETRIS
CHRISTOFIAS AT THE 48TH CONFERENCE OF THE PARLIAMENTARY
COMMITTEES FOR UNION AFFAIRS OF MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN
UNION (COSAC)
(Nicosia, 15 October 2012)

Representative of the President of the House of
Representatives (Sophocles Fyttis),

[Vice President of the European Commission (Mr Maros
Sefkovic)]

Honourable members of the National Parliaments of the EU
member states and candidate countries,

Honourable members of the European Parliament,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It was a great pleasure for me to accept the invitation of the
House of Representatives to address the 48th Conference of
COSAC. Allow me first to extend to you a warm welcome to
Cyprus and wish you a pleasant stay, in the hope that you will
enjoy the Cypriot hospitality and return home with sweet
memories of our island.

The holding of your Conference in Nicosia is undoubtedly one of
the most important events in the calendar of the Cyprus
Presidency of the Council, with regard to the parliamentary
dimension of the Presidency. I would like to congratulate the
House of Representatives and all who have been working hard
for the successful organisation of the COSAC Conference in
Cyprus.

On my part, as a former parliamentarian and former President
of the Cyprus Parliament, I would like to express my personal
satisfaction at the fact that the Reform Lisbon Treaty has
greatly strengthened the role both of the European Parliament
and of course of the national parliaments of the member states

of our Union. Without a doubt, the European Parliament is now on an equal footing with the Council as a legislator for the vast majority of legislative proposals. Moreover, the role of the national parliaments has been reinforced as regards the exercise of control in connection with the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity, as well as with regard to their general participation in European affairs.

In my view, the strengthening of the role of national parliaments in the planning of strategy and the creation of the various European policies is an important step towards reducing the democratic deficit faced by the Union. There is no doubt that you, the representatives of the national parliaments, are closer to the citizens of the Union, and are therefore in a better position to be able to inform your citizens of developments in Europe. Your role and contribution is of definitive importance in our effort to halt the wave of nationalist populism which is growing so rapidly in so many EU countries. It is within this framework that inter-parliamentary cooperation within the EU has its own added value in the promotion of the increased political integration of Europe. As the Cyprus Presidency of the Council, I wish to assure you that we support and encourage the further strengthening of this inter-parliamentary cooperation.

There is no doubt that the COSAC Conference is taking place at a particularly interesting point in time for the first Cypriot Presidency of the Council. We have already entered the second half of our Presidency, and we remain unwaveringly devoted to our goal and continue our hard work to promote the common European interest.

When Cyprus undertook the Presidency of the Council of the European Union three months ago, our primary goal was to work as an honest broker to promote our common European

priorities. Cyprus took over the Presidency with a powerful sense of responsibility and commitment to all the Member States.

I assure you that despite the problems and anomalies created in our country by the continued Turkish military occupation of the northern part of our island, our unwavering goal is to work exclusively as the presiding country, without allowing our national problem to cast a shadow over the work of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council. At the same time, we will not allow our role as the presiding country to be set at risk because of the Cyprus problem. For us it is clear that **the Cyprus Presidency and the Cyprus problem are two separate but parallel processes.**

Like all Member States which undertake the Presidency of the Council in the second half of each year, we are working extremely intensively in order to cover a wide range of issues in a shorter space of time. Already, both the first month of our Presidency and September have fulfilled our expectations and we are ready for an even more intensive autumn. We will not relax in our vigilance: it is our duty and obligation to promote a number of issues and complete as many of these as we are able, in order to ensure a smooth continuation of the work of the Council.

Both at the preparation phase and during the Presidency itself, Cyprus is committed **to work in close cooperation with the European Parliament.** I myself declared this categorically before the plenary assembly of the European Parliament on 4 July, during the presentation of the agenda and priorities of the first Cyprus Presidency of the Council.

We have taken over the rotating Presidency in an admittedly very difficult economic period for all EU member states. It is

with regret that we note that the current crisis which is beleaguering Europe and the Eurozone in particular, is unfortunately also giving rise to a crisis of confidence on the part of many European citizens towards our common European edifice. Without a doubt, this is the greatest political, economic, social and institutional crisis since the Union was founded. I am, however, convinced that together we can and must reverse this climate of doubt and reduced confidence on the part of EU citizens towards the European Institutions.

As a result of the broader prevailing climate and the need to boost the confidence of European citizens, the Cyprus Presidency has committed itself to work –and will continue to do so until the end of the six months towards a **Better Europe**, a European Union that is closer to its citizens and the world, with emphasis on **social cohesion and the principle of solidarity**.

It is important to pay attention to developments and be the first to tackle any problems that arise. The report of the President of the European Council, as well as the Declaration of the Eurozone Summit last June point to the pressing need both to take measures aimed at promoting development, employment and stability, and 'to break the vicious circle between banks and public debt'.

The **June European Council** emphasised the fact that member states need to be in a state of readiness and that the current period is making us see with increasing clarity the importance of solidarity, development and social cohesion.

Having in mind the vision of a Better Europe, the Cyprus Presidency is already working towards a Europe which means more to its citizens, and a Europe with a more efficient economy, based on development. The idea of a

Better Europe must be the driving force for the future of the Union: a Union which will be more efficient and effective, which will have an enhanced international role, and be closer to its neighbours.

As you might be aware, **the main issues on the agenda of the Cyprus Presidency are the negotiations for the new Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2014-2020, the completion of the Common European Asylum System as well as matters of Economic Governance.** I understand that Deputy Minister for European Affairs, Mr. Andreas Mavroyiannis will brief you in detail about progress to date on the matters handled by the Cyprus Presidency, and I would therefore not wish to pre-empt my friend the Deputy Minister.

Allow me to say just a few words about the major issue of the Multi-Annual Financial Framework for the next programming period, 2014-2020. The Cyprus Presidency has placed high among its priorities **the completion of negotiations for the new Multi-Annual Financial Framework before the end of 2012.** The agenda of work is very intensive and the Presidency is making tireless efforts, always within the framework of the Community Method, to achieve the greatest possible progress in the negotiations, aiming from the outset at excellent cooperation with all member states, as well of course as close cooperation with the other institutional bodies: the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the President of the European Council. We hope that at the extraordinary meeting of the Council on 22 and 23 November, we will be able to reach overall political agreement on the Union's budget for the next seven years. **My own personal hope and expectation is that we will decide upon a budget of solidarity whose primary goals will be development, the reduction of unemployment –especially among the young- and the eradication of conditions of poverty and social exclusion.**

We need a budget that will contribute to strengthening social convergence and cohesion.

I could claim that it would be only natural that the Multi-Annual Financial Framework will monopolise the interest both of European circles and the media in the coming period, but allow me to underline that the Cyprus Presidency has before it a full agenda of work on a series of other important sectoral policies. We are fully aware of this situation and I wish to stress that the work being carried out in both Brussels and Nicosia is remarkable.

With regard to the aim of making the Union more effective, our Presidency wishes to give the appropriate attention to issues of economic governance, since it is important to strengthen fiscal surveillance and to promote measures, where judged useful, for further fiscal stability. The Presidency is working extremely hard to make sure that we will have tangible results, if possible by the end of the year on the very important issue of the establishment of the Banking Union. Unfortunately, the experience of the current crisis, which is beleaguering us all, has raised issues related to the loose bank surveillance system and the financial system in Europe in general. I would, however, like to underline at this point a political parameter which I consider very important. Any measures that we promote at the European level must be based on the **main political goal of creating conditions for recovery of the economy, which will lead to the much longed-for development and job creation, especially for the young generation which is facing the most serious problem. In this political equation it must not be just the numbers and economic indicators which will be consolidated, but also the prosperity and well-being of the citizens.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to end my address with a message of optimism. Our Union has faced insuperable difficulties in the past and has always emerged stronger than before. It is my conviction that in these, admittedly very challenging times, it is necessary, more than ever before, to remain united: united on the basis of the legacy of the founding fathers of European political unification and economic integration. We have a duty to secure conditions of sustainable development for the future generations of European citizens, for our children. We have a duty to secure and further reinforce the powerful institutional framework within which the 27 –shortly to be 28- member states, live and work. The Cyprus Presidency of the Council is committed to continuing to work tirelessly and in a spirit of consensus in order to secure smooth and effective cooperation among us. I am certain that in this commitment we will have you at our side so that all together we can build a Better Europe, which will mean more to its citizens.

Thank you very much.