



**Thursday 5/7/2012**

**Address of the Minister of Defence  
Mr. Demetris Eliades  
At the Opening of Proceedings of the  
Informal Defence Policy Directors Meeting**

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It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to Cyprus for the Informal Meeting of Defence Policy Directors, and we thank you for your participation. I hope that the proceedings of your meeting will be constructive and your stay on our island pleasant.

The assumption of the Presidency of the Council of the EU by Cyprus is an exceptional moment and a huge challenge. We are a small country and a new Member State. We do not possess armies of experts, technocrats and specialists; neither do we possess previous experience. Nevertheless, nothing prevents us from being diligent, serious and responsible; from having ideas, proposals, and suggestions; from being creative.

As Presidency, we will function in full cooperation with the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton, the European External Action Service, all our partners, all the acceding countries without exception, and the organizations with which the EU collaborates. We will function with objectivity, moderation and in a spirit of consensus, so as to serve the ultimate goal of our Common Security and Defence Policy, for the peace of European countries and the people of Europe.

The EU portrays itself as a calm force, with ethical, political, cultural and economic initiatives on the international arena, with a pioneering presence in the field of humanitarian and development assistance and solidarity. It is for this reason that the EU can contribute decisively towards the encountering of major problems and towards the consolidation of peace and security.

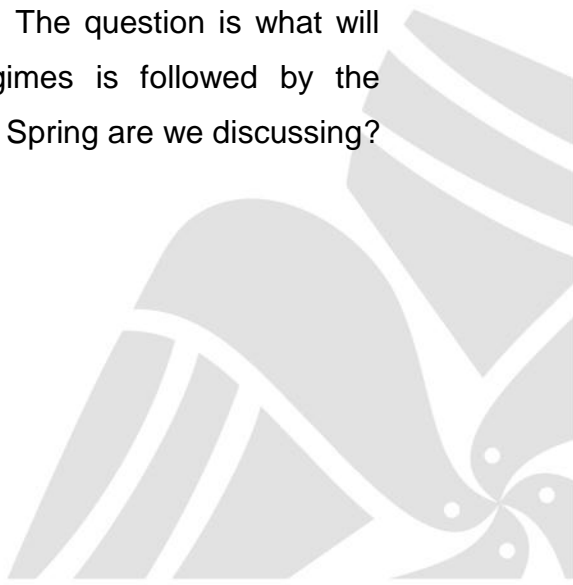
Following the Lisbon Treaty, new horizons are opening up, as well as challenges in the field of CSDP, in a difficult and ever – changing context, within which the institutional organs and Member States of the EU are called upon to function.

In this framework, and with a clear intention to contribute towards the efforts of the High Representative and the External Action Service, we have drawn up an extended programme during our Presidency.

The contribution of the Ministry of Defence materializes through a number of activities, which correspond to the following four thematic topics a) Development of military capabilities, b) Promotion of international security with particular emphasis on maritime security and the Middle East, c) Promotion of a common culture through the European Security and Defence College and d) Related publications with the contribution of distinguished officials of the Union, academics and personnel, whom we warmly thank.

Timely and diligent preparation is a precondition, but not a guarantee for a successful presidency, since external factors have the potential to disrupt our programme, despite our thorough planning. In addition, the crisis in the Eurozone creates further internal pressures.

The Cyprus Presidency coincides with significant challenges, which have emerged from the encountering of critical issues within the European agenda, but also from the unpredictable developments in Syria and the Middle East, the negotiations of the Union with Iran, and the aftershocks of the Arab Spring. The question is what will follow? Because if the overthrow of authoritarian regimes is followed by the emergence of other authoritarian regimes, then what Arab Spring are we discussing? We will be led from one Arab Winter to the next.



The developments in the area concern and involve the EU for many reasons, whilst our specific level of interaction and interest, emanate from our proximity to the countries in the southern and eastern Mediterranean.

The first Cypriot Presidency aims at a better Europe and this aim is based on our conviction that the EU is our common home, the present and future of our people.

We have to safeguard this future with our common policy regarding security, peace, stability and growth.

As presidency we need and count on the understanding and cooperation of our partners. We believe that with strong political will and hard work we can overcome the current difficulties, and open up optimistic outlooks for the future of Europe and its people. In this direction the Cyprus Presidency will deposit its small contribution.

Thank you once again for your response and participation, I welcome you to Cyprus and wish you a pleasant stay on our island.

