

**REMARKS BY THE
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS,
MR. DEMETRIS CHRISTOFIAS
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE
EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT DAYS 2012
Brussels, 16 October 2012**

Presidents,

Mr President of the European Commission,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I have accepted the invitation of the President of the European Commission and friend, Jose Manuel Barroso, to participate at the opening of the 7th annual European Development Days.

I would like to congratulate the European Commission for making this event an important milestone in the international development agenda. Every year the European Development Days contribute substantially to global efforts for a better and more just world.

It is a real honour for me to be given this opportunity to address this year's event and to share with you my thoughts on the main challenges which we are facing in our efforts to pursue inclusive growth for human development.

Dear Friends,

I believe that the daily struggles for survival and the basic needs of the disadvantaged and vulnerable fellow human beings should be our first priority. This may seem obvious but it should not be taken for granted. Many times, the ambitious declarations of the international community are accompanied by uncoordinated actions with poor results.

The world in general, but also us here in Europe, are currently facing the consequences of adhering to dogmatic models of the past, of unsupervised markets that given consideration to society and the people and has undermined social cohesion. One consequence is that more Europeans are now queuing up for a portion of food. Survival has become a daily concern due to social exclusion and impoverishment.

We must learn from such past mistakes and contribute so that we put an end to the imposition of similar models of economic growth on developing countries. Sustainable and inclusive economic growth should be anchored in the distinct social and human needs of every country.

Dear Friends,

Our main target - the eradication of poverty and hunger- requires measures for building resilience and for the establishment of social safety nets. In many countries, hunger and poverty have become a vicious circle. Securing adequacy

of food, is a basic requirement for fighting against poverty and for our hopes for a better life.

Across the world, hunger continues to be a major challenge: more than 3 million children annually die from lack of adequate food. Malnutrition threatens more than 15% of the world's population. Food insecurity continues to affect nearly 1 billion people around the world.

This year the Millennium Development Goal Target of reducing extreme poverty by half has been reached. But this statistical increase in the income of the poorest is an important milestone that hides grim realities: The poverty-trap has not allowed all the people who escape 'extreme poverty' to avoid hunger. The main reason is that energy, land and food prices continued to increase faster than the income of the poor.

Despite high levels of economic growth in many developing countries during the last decade there are no signs of improvement for many of the undernourished. Approximately 850 million people still go hungry to bed every night.

Mr. Presidents, dear friends,

The increase in wealth during the last decade has not sufficiently trickled down to the poorest segments of our societies. This reality confirms that inclusive, pro-poor growth and social safety nets do not come about automatically. This reality also illustrates that unless we take additional measures,

then hunger will remain the major global challenge, the world's Achilles Heel.

The only way to address and change such daunting realities is solidarity. We should stand shoulder to shoulder. We must coordinate better and more effectively and upgrade existing efforts, mainly within the new framework of development cooperation. In the 21st Century, in the so called world of plenty, every human being should have the 'Right to Food'.

European Development Days demonstrate our solidarity to the people who suffer. This event should become the land-mark which pushed 'the fight against hunger' amongst the top priorities of the world's development agenda, now and after 2015.

No 'development actor' – big or small can overcome these challenges alone. It should be a common effort.

Dear friends,

The Republic of Cyprus, its people and I personally, are particularly sensitive towards the challenge for the eradication of hunger and for building food security. Let's not forget that Cyprus was, in its recent history, on the receiving end of development aid after the disaster caused by the Turkish military invasion of 1974. Today, although we are a relatively modest donor ourselves, we want to reciprocate the generous gesture of the international community by concretely expressing our solidarity to other people in need.

Together with the EU Member States, the European Commission and of course the European Parliament we are contributing to global efforts in the Horn of Africa, in the Sahel and other regions which urgently need support.

In addition, the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of European Union has included in its priorities the development cooperation policy, giving particular emphasis on the eradication of hunger.

At a political level, we are raising awareness about the fight against hunger. Together with the Cyprus bicomunal platform of Non-Governmental Organisations, CYINDEP, Cyprus will co-host a Global Civil Society Symposium on 23 November to discuss the eradication of hunger as a goal for the post-2015 development agenda.

Dear Friends,

Today is World Food Day! It is of course no coincidence that the European Development Days starts today. We should all join forces so that the eradication of hunger becomes our main priority and a separate development goal in the post-2015 development architecture.