

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS  
MR. DEMETRIS CHRISTOFIAS  
AT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT  
ON THE RESULTS OF THE FIRST CYPRUS  
PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION  
(Strasbourg, 15 January 2013)**

Dear Mr. President of the European Parliament,  
Presidents of the Political Groups in the European Parliament,  
Honourable Members of Parliament,  
President of the European Commission,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would first like to wish everyone all the best for the New Year, full of health and personal happiness. I also hope that 2013 will mark the year when Europe finally exits the economic and social crisis, which has been plaguing it for years. This crisis has been unprecedented in terms of depth and intensity, upsetting social cohesion in the European Union and undermining the prosperity and well-being of its citizens.

I would like to thank all the institutions of the Union, but primarily the European Parliament and the Presidents of all the Political Groups, for their support during the Cyprus Presidency. I also wish to refer to the very close cooperation with the European Commission and wholeheartedly to thank my friend President José Manuel Barroso, whose personal contribution was pivotal in promoting our common European agenda. I also wish to express my gratitude to our partners in the TRIO Presidency, Poland and Denmark, for the excellent cooperation, as well as all those of course who had worked hard for the first Cyprus Presidency.

I am certain that the current Irish Presidency will fully achieve its aims. Our Irish partners undoubtedly have the commitment, experience and skills to lead Europe forward. It would be a great honour for us if they deem useful what we have built in the past six months.

**Allow me now to address you personally Mr. President of the Parliament, my dear friend Martin Schulz, thanking you from the bottom of my heart for the collaboration, generous assistance and support of the Cyprus Presidency in the past six months. I am truly grateful for your confidence in us.**

Mr. President, Dear Friends,

Last July, Cyprus assumed for the first time since its accession to the EU, the six-month Presidency of the Council, in admittedly very difficult circumstances for our Union. This included uncertainty about the future of the Eurozone and our common European currency, turmoil in the institutional unity of the Union and doubts about the future of a united Europe.

Especially as regards the Eurozone, I think the firm steps that have been taken in the past six months should be recognised. Everything seems to point to the fact that these have contributed decisively to the strengthening and preservation of the cohesion of the Eurozone,

safeguarding the future of our common European currency. I sincerely hope that the worst is over.

From the outset, we supported the view that the current difficulties and challenges facing the European Union require a groundbreaking **European response**. We stressed that in times of crisis, it becomes imperative to achieve a more cohesive and efficient Union, a **Better Europe**. Our broad goal was to work towards a Better Europe, which means more to its citizens. A Better Europe in the world. A Union that operates on its core principles and values. A more efficient Union with sustainable policies that strengthen employment, growth and social cohesion.

Our primary political objective was to contribute, to the extent of our strength and competence, towards a **Union with far more visible benefits for the welfare of European citizens**. We firmly believe that the European Union today, more than ever, needs more coherent policies that safeguard social cohesion and prosperity for all its citizens. **Undoubtedly, what the citizens need most today is a real Social Europe**. We need a Union of Social Cohesion, which provides assistance and delivers tangible solutions to its citizens' day by day social and economic problems. I think that we owe it to the visionaries of European integration and to Europe's younger generations; it is our children who foresee a bleak future since they are the ones mostly suffering from unemployment.

I am especially pleased that the Cyprus Presidency of the Council has promoted horizontally this major policy during the second half of 2012. I am glad of the broader debate in Europe on the need to establish a **Social Union**, which is in line with my political affiliation and social sensitivity. The Social Union, of course, shall complement and not annul the collective efforts to strengthen the Economic and Monetary Union and the strenuous efforts of almost all of the Union's Member States for economic restructuring and overcoming the crisis.

A **Better Europe** also means easier and more effective institutional relations and communication between the main institutions of the EU. One of our foremost objectives – which I believe we fulfilled – was to act as honest broker, working constructively within the Council and in close consultation with the other institutions, thus promoting, inter-institutional cooperation. We aimed for synergy and complementarity between EU institutions and agencies, promoting the common European agenda. In full respect of our interlocutors from the various institutions, we advocated dignity and good faith, the moral core of all our interactions as Presidency of the Council.

I am particularly pleased that the Cyprus Presidency substantially contributed to developing very good, sincere and consistent relations with the Commission, but mainly with the European Parliament. As I promised you all on 4 July, the Cyprus Presidency faithfully followed the **community method**, securing a dynamic relationship of trust and cooperation with the European Parliament. Allow me to emphasize also that we worked constructively, fully respecting the competences of all the institutions of the Union.

Undoubtedly, the **enhanced mutual trust** of the past six months between the Union's two co-legislators should continue and develop even further.

**This, Ladies and Gentlemen, in my opinion is the fundamental political achievement of the first Cyprus Presidency of the Council, with significant institutional implications.**

The Cyprus Presidency exerted great effort on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020, as mandated by the European Council last June. Unfortunately, it was not possible to reach agreement on this foremost issue. I firmly believe that the Cyprus Presidency's contribution was constructive for the necessary "maturation" that should continue in the coming weeks, under the guidance of the President of the European Council, for an agreement to be reached. I still believe that the new Multiannual Financial Framework should be the primary tool at our disposal to boost growth and job creation in Europe.

Mr. President, Honourable Members of Parliament,

It is with humility and sincerity that I note that the Cyprus Presidency achieved **significant results and targets** for the Union, by being realistic. I shall briefly mention a few of these.

- One of the main priorities of the Cyprus Presidency was the establishment of the **Common European Asylum System**. The Cypriot Presidency inherited the four outstanding legislative proposals to complete the work on the Common European Asylum System. I am very pleased to say that we are very close to effectively meeting this great goal.
- We managed, after coordinated efforts with the European Parliament and especially the all-important cooperation with President Schulz, to normalize the situation in relation to the **Schengen Governance** regime. With the help of all member states and of course the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament, the Cyprus Presidency managed to evade a major pitfall that potentially could have impeded horizontal cooperation between the Council and the European Parliament, thereby subverting our co-legislative work and broader planning.
- Further, I would note my great satisfaction that the extraordinary Economic and Financial Affairs Council convened by the Cyprus Presidency on 12 December achieved the major objective of reaching agreement within the Council, in the framework of a general approach, on the **Single Supervisory Mechanism**, thus making an important step towards the realisation of the **Banking Union and the direct recapitalisation of banks**. We look forward to working closely with you so that, within the ordinary legislative procedure, the finalisation takes place as soon as possible for the implementation of the Single Supervisory Mechanism to take effect.
- Another notable success of the Presidency, made possible through the close cooperation with the European Parliament, in extremely difficult conditions, was the timely agreement with the European Parliament on the **EU's budget for 2013 and supplementary budgets for 2012**.
- The agreement on the **Unitary Patent** undoubtedly is a great achievement for the Union. The inter-institutional crisis that commenced last June was overcome and after over-30 years of negotiations, the relevant Regulation has finally been signed. This will help the competitiveness and growth particularly of SMEs, the backbone of the European economy. Additionally, despite the overall delays on some legislative proposals, I am pleased that the Cyprus Presidency has reached agreement with the European Parliament on five important actions on the **Single Market Act**.

- In the area of external trade, a significant step was made with the launching of negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement with Japan. It is noteworthy that according to Commission estimates, it is expected that as a result of this Agreement 400,000 additional jobs will be created in the EU.
- Last but not least, let me refer to the success of the Cyprus Presidency in “reenergising” the EU’s **Integrated Maritime Policy**. The *Limassol Declaration* has given a new impetus to exploit the huge potential of “Blue Growth”. Undoubtedly, maritime and shipping activities may contribute decisively towards growth and new jobs in these difficult times.

Mr President, Dear Friends,

Our main aim during our six-month Presidency was to contribute constructively to furthering European integration. I honestly believe that the main results of our Presidency, as I have previously indicated, are undeniable proof of our positive contribution.

Dear Friends,

On the occasion of my presence here today in Parliament and in view of the completion of my tenure as President of the Republic of Cyprus, I would like to share with you my thoughts and feelings on the future of our Union. The vast bureaucracy on which the Union is institutionally constructed erodes, in my humble opinion, rational policies that aim to effectively respond to the daily needs of Europeans. I am saddened to see that there is a gap between the political decision-making at the level, for example, of the European Council compared to what is realised at the technocratic level. It cannot be that the June European Council finally focuses on growth and strengthening of employment, while simultaneously the technocrats-representatives of the Troika promote the same-old failed recipes of one-sided strict austerity, leading millions of European citizens to poverty, deprivation and social exclusion.

This rightly **disheartens** our citizens. We have a duty to reverse this frustration towards the European Union that is gaining greater ground in our countries. We must be united in making European integration something that is appealing, once again providing hope to European citizens and especially our young people. The European Union should not give the impression that it only supports big business and bankers. Policies granting absolute freedom to the market – amounting to reckless behaviour and the freedom of speculators and multinational corporations to impose austerity measures on the people of Europe, stifling growth and disrupting the social fabric – must be abandoned. It is my firm conviction that unilateral policies of austerity are a guaranteed recipe for failure, only succeeding in making the rich richer and the poor poorer.

If the European Union wants millions of its citizens to acknowledge it as a guarantor of stability and peace, then it must meaningfully promote social cohesion in the Union. Without social cohesion and social justice, the European Union is an organization of states lacking a vision. Prosperity for all and **social peace** is an integral part of the noble vision of the founding fathers of a united Europe. We’ve won the Nobel Peace Prize but 37% of a member state’s ground is being occupied by a country that wants to join the EU.

I believe that especially nowadays when the European Union is going through a multifaceted

crisis, we must look to the principles on which the Union was founded for guidance; especially to the Principle of Solidarity. We cannot just pay lip service to the Principle of Solidarity, but must take it literally. Not to serve, as some might fear, unrestrained lending of the “poor south from the rich European north”, but to reassert through transparent procedures and best practices, that the word “Union” in the term “European Union” is not void of meaning, but has substance and political bite, via effective actions that make a difference to the people.

Concluding my speech, I would like to stress that we must intensify our efforts towards a **Better Europe**, where the citizen is at its core, tangibly benefiting from the Union, as this is more essential than ever before. The journey to Ithaca is a long and difficult one. Undoubtedly, however, together, we can do it better!

Thank you very much.