

## 8<sup>th</sup> APA PLENARY SESSION

Phnom Pehn-Cambodia, 7-12 December 2015

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### GENERAL DEBATE

**"Promoting Peace, Reconciliation and Dialogue in Asia"**

**Mr. Nicos Tornaritis, MP (Cyprus)**

Esteemed Chairperson,

Dear colleagues,

Asia is the largest, most populated continent in the world; abound with natural resources and a forceful young human capital, Asia has unique advantages and the potential to become the global driving force of economic and political stability and prosperity. This is a vision that I know is shared by all of us and inspires us to further intensify and consolidate our efforts towards achieving the goals of peace, justice, security and prosperity, as set out in the preamble of the Charter of the APA.

In order to achieve these goals, we should address the multi-dimensional root causes of conflict, through the implementation of a comprehensive and integrated approach aimed at prevention, considering in particular that armed conflicts are one of the most serious obstacles to development. Within the scope of our role as Parliamentarians, who can help restore lasting peace by promoting international reconciliation and give expression to democracy, we always have to keep in mind that conflict is often the result of mismanaged crisis reconciliation.

Moreover, we should always look for the human rights perspective, so encouragement of respective parliamentary committees that relate extensively with the UN and other international bodies ranks highly. Important humanitarian projects will be more easily carried out this way. All parliamentary assemblies, like the APA, should enhance their role and

activities in the areas of peace and reconciliation. In so doing parliaments will exercise pressure on governments to participate and finance peacekeeping operations under the UN, as well as provide technical assistance under bilateral or multilateral cooperation projects.

Conflicts remain unresolved as we tend to forget the very substance of our commitments to the UN Charter, pertinent resolutions and the rule of international law. The very existence of such conflicts today reflects, inter-alia, the empty promises made to thousands of children and refugees. In general, we turn our faces away essentially to human rights and the rule of law, which are the main principles that we have pledged to uphold. We should focus all our attention in getting international, regional, sub-regional organizations and NGO's to promote international reconciliation, stabilize conflict-prone regions and consolidate peace through post-conflict reconciliation.

Furthermore, our parliaments should foster national and international measures designed to promote the concept of a peace culture, volunteerism, combating all forms of violence, outlawing terrorism, and education for all. Along these guidelines, we should actively seek to reduce the trade in weapons, even small arms, drugs, combat poverty, corruption and environmental degradation. The Post – 2015 Development Agenda, adopted last September by the UN General Assembly should be placed at the centre of our efforts. Parliaments have a critical part to play in ensuring the implementation of the Post-2015 agenda, through the passing of laws, the adoption of budgets and the holding of governments to account in implementing the commitments they have made while ensuring the efficient use of limited resources.

As you may all know, Cyprus is placed at the heart of the Eastern Mediterranean, a region rich in culture and history but not a stranger to

conflict and war. Cyprus itself remains divided for more than 40 years now, striving all this time to reach a peaceful solution that will reunite the island and its people. Despite this long standing problem, however, Cyprus has successfully grown into a hub of stability and cooperation in its region and is therefore in a position to truly appreciate the importance of dialogue and reconciliation efforts as the means through which stability and development can be fostered.

Since 2004, Cyprus is a fully-fledged member of the European Union, while at the same time it maintains excellent relations with the majority of its neighbouring countries, promoting commercial, economic and other exchanges. Recent developments in the region in the field of energy, and in particular the discovery of rich hydrocarbon reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean basin, including within the Exclusive Economic Zone of Cyprus, have highlighted further the geostrategic importance of the region.

In today's globalized, inter-connected world, every single one of our actions and decisions has a direct or indirect impact on millions of people. Through our presence here today, we send out a clear message. It is only through dialogue and coordinated actions that we can resolve conflicts and bring about stability and prosperity in Asia and ultimately in the world.

Cyprus, in its part, can play a pivotal role, as a country placed at the crossroad of Europe, Africa and Asia and a full member of the European Union, acting as bridge for the further enhancement of ties and collaboration between Asia and Europe.

Thank you kindly for your attention.