

**7<sup>TH</sup> A P A P L E N A R Y S E S S I O N**  
**Lahore, 1-3 December 2014**

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**PLENARY SESSION**

**“Quest for an Asian Parliament in an Asian Century”**

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

- I would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to the Parliament and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for organizing and hosting this meeting, which brings together the elected representatives of the people of Asia to deliberate on issues of common interest and concern. It was here in Pakistan, in December last year, that representatives of our respective Parliaments participating in the 6<sup>th</sup> APA Plenary Session, expressed their resolve and determination to work towards further establishing APA as a credible, representative and institutional voice for the people of Asia.
- The issues at hand, on which we are called to approve relevant resolutions, represent a vast scope of competencies. We have indeed moved a long way since the inception of the Association of Asian Parliaments for Peace almost two decades ago.
- Today, we live in a globalized, inter-connected world, where every single one of our actions and decisions has a direct or indirect impact on millions of people. In this respect, we must act in synergy with other regional players. It is now time for Asia to claim the role it deserves in international parliamentary affairs.
- As Europe is currently embroiled in an unprecedented economic crisis that has also brought about social and political turmoil, both on the continent itself and far beyond, Asia has a significant role to play, in helping move the West and ultimately the world, beyond the current crisis.
- Today's challenges and threats cannot be tackled by countries individually. Collective action is essential and is a prerequisite to achieving the goals of peace, justice, security and economic and social prosperity, as set out in the preamble of the Charter of the APA.

- Issues of common concern range from dealing with the effects of climate change to fostering sustainable development and from working for the elimination of poverty to combatting terrorism and promoting safety and security. The Asian continent is rich in resources and has a vast economic potential that must be harnessed wisely for the benefit of its people.
- Strengthening regional cooperation is a crucial step in efforts to further enhance the development of Asian economies. Improved governance and a focus on greater access and inclusion within the economies, with sustainable development placed at the heart of policy planning, can lead the economy and people of Asia to progress and prosperity, while minimizing collateral costs.
- As legislators, we can promote, through our legislative scrutinizing functions, policies that will have a direct beneficial impact on the quality of life of millions of citizens.
- In our efforts towards furthering interaction and enhancing collaboration, parliamentary diplomacy is of the utmost importance, as it makes it easier to draw upon common experiences and challenges to foster political, economic and cultural cooperation. As we work together to set out a plan of action towards enhancing regional integration, our common goal should be to harmonize efforts and adopt a common stance on non-controversial issues that affect all of us, such as climate change and the illegal export and movement of cultural goods and artifacts. This would indeed be a tangible first step in the right direction.
- It should be stressed however that an Asian Parliament need not be a structure with a complex organizational setup imposing unnecessary administrative, financial and procedural burdens. It should rather be a flexible body that will reflect the diverse and rich character of APA member states, able to respond to our multifaceted needs.
- Asia's challenges remain formidable and its future prosperity must be earned. Our determination and proactive cooperation in embracing the right policy choices today can indeed make this the "Asian century".