

9th APA PLENARY SESSION

Siem Reap-Cambodia, 27 November – 2 December 2016

GENERAL DEBATE – 29 November

"Promoting Peace and Sustainable Development in Asia"

Mr. Nicos Tornaritis, MP (Cyprus)

Esteemed Chairperson,

Honourable 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 and sustainable development, as set out in the APA Charter.

As Parliamentarians, we have an obligation to help achieve these goals and work for the prevalence of lasting peace, the promotion of international reconciliation and the overall safeguarding of democracy. At the same time we also have an obligation to ensure that the fundamental rights of the people of Asia are respected. In this regard, the link between the promotion of peace and sustainable development is more pertinent than ever before. As conflicts and uncertainty are flaring across the globe, we must seek to secure those conditions that will allow the people of Asia to develop and progress, thus fostering stability, prosperity and ultimately peace. The message is clear: sustainable development is both a key to combating environmental degradation and climate change, and a forceful medium for nurturing stability and prosperity.

The Paris Agreement aiming to enhance the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change entered into force a few weeks ago. It can be rightly described as the world's first comprehensive agreement on climate change, and is a major global achievement that we must all work dedicatedly to implement.

The involvement of the APA, acting in synergy with other inter-parliamentary and inter-governmental organisations in these efforts, is crucial. Parliaments have a critical part to play in ensuring the overall implementation of the Paris Agreement and 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.

Inclusiveness and participation are of the utmost importance in these efforts. We must ensure, in our role as representatives of the people that civil society, the business community and all other stakeholders have a direct role to play. We must work to ensure that the link between economic growth and sustainable development is achieved, through harnessing the human capital and resources of each country, in the context of its own local circumstances and fully respecting its particular environmental conditions. These are the primary aims as set out in the pertinent resolutions before us for approval, during this (9th) Plenary Session.

A truly transformative (Post-2015) development agenda cannot of course be realized without full enjoyment of human rights, adherence to the rule of law and good governance. These fundamental principles constitute the backbone of peace and stability within and among countries and they are prerequisites for worldwide sustainable development.

In the context of peace efforts, the President of the Republic of Cyprus and the Leader of the T/C community have recently held a round of intensified negotiations in Switzerland regarding the Cyprus problem, in the hope to reunite the island and end the 42-year old division, bringing about once again lasting peace and security for both communities, thus reinstating all human rights violations that have taken place since the 1974 invasion of Cyprus. However, it was not made possible to reach consensus on the core territorial issue. The President of the Republic will not spare any efforts to resume a meaningful dialogue that will lead to an overall lasting settlement, in accordance with pertinent UN Resolutions and international human rights.

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

Dear Colleagues,

In today's globalised, 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 and the resolutions we adopt, we send out a clear message: it is only through dialogue and coordinated actions that we can resolve conflicts and bring about stability, prosperity and hence sustainable development in Asia.

Thank you kindly for your attention.

November 2016

CS/LM