

9th APA PLENARY SESSION

Siem Reap-Cambodia, 27 November – 2 December 2016

GENERAL DEBATE – 29 November 2016

"Promoting Peace and Sustainable Development in Asia"

Mr. Christakis Giovanis, MP (Cyprus)

Esteemed Chairperson,

Dear colleagues,

We live in an interconnected yet constantly changing global environment. The complexity of challenges and threats faced by countries in today's world deems essential the need for collective action. Issues of common concern that 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, issues that cannot be dealt with individually. The Asian continent is rich in resources and has a vast economic potential that through (concerted) collective action can 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.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides an ideal starting point through which we can coordinate our actions so as to achieve the much sought after goal of peace, security and prosperity for the people of Asia. The (2030) Agenda, places a strong focus on working for peaceful, just and inclusive societies and directly acknowledges on a global level, the direct link between peace and sustainable development. Goal 16 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals adopted last year, clearly addresses this link as it proclaims the need to "*promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*".

The message must be clearly read by all of us. We have a duty as legislators to work for the promotion of policies that consolidate the above goal. We must ensure through

our legislative and scrutinizing functions that our systems of government are based on sound institutional structures that ensure the fair administration of justice and respect of the rule of law. In these efforts the involvement of citizens is of the utmost importance. We should adopt a bottom-up approach whereby the people are given a voice in the decision-making processes that affect them. We should reach out to the people and nurture partnerships and cooperation between government and civil society, as it is imperative that local communities are engaged and actively involved in all processes.

Honourable colleagues,

In our efforts towards furthering interaction and enhancing collaboration, parliamentary diplomacy is of the utmost importance, as it makes it easier to draw from common experiences and challenges to foster necessary transformative policies and action. At the same time it is important to keep in mind the enriching diversity that characterizes Asia. In the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, we must take into consideration our individual complexities and particular needs and capacities. The aim should not be to enforce a blanket approach.

As we work together to set out a plan of action towards enhancing regional integration, our goal should be to harmonize efforts and adopt a common stance on the issues that affect all of us. This would indeed be a tangible first step in the right direction.

Thank you kindly for your attention.

November 2016

CS/LM