

Monsieur le Président,
Messieurs les Ministres, Mesdames,
Mesdames et Messieurs les Ambassadeurs,
Mesdames, Messieurs, Cher amis,

Mr. President,

It is of course a great honour to receive you tonight but I want to add that we are especially grateful that, right after having returned from Paris where you attended many meetings and official events, you accepted to spend a little more time in another French event, in Nicosia.

Yesterday, in Paris, you participated in an important meeting of 43 Heads of State and Government who agreed to give a new impetus to the cooperation between Europe and the Mediterranean.

I am not going to repeat what you have heard a few hours ago but I would like, first, to thank you and your predecessor, President Papadopoulos, for having expressed Cyprus support to this project immediately after it was proposed by President Sarkozy, the very day of his election, and for having maintained this clear support since then.

There are not so many new ideas which can mobilize and gather 43 countries and 700 million people. Previous generations - particularly in Europe where reconciliation was such a necessity - did not hesitate to innovate, create new structures and organizations.

Now we have this new ambition which, just like Europe, is an ambition of peace, shared prosperity, better governance and freedom, for a broader area.

Reconciliation, peace, shared prosperity: these are also objectives we all wish to see achieved soon in Cyprus. This is why, Mr. President, the initiative you took after your election and the process launched since March 21 with the Turkish Cypriot leadership has obtained an immediate, continuous and fully justified international support.

Never before, I think, the chances of success were higher than now and I would like to respectfully congratulate you for your determination in pursuing this process, a rightfully genuine Cypriot process, and for keeping your conviction that progress means taking risks, making compromises, accepting criticism but also that all this seems little when success comes – that is the end of decades of separation for the Cypriots, and to much time lost.

Needless to say that all these remarks are to be shared with your partner, your “comrade”, Mr. Mehmet Ali TALAT, who could not be with us tonight, but I’m happy to welcome his advisers and collaborators, who dedicate their time and efforts to make this process a success.

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Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, as you observed, this garden, tonight, is blue as well as green. During this semester, France holds the presidency of the EU for the twelfth time. The first time was in 1959. But if the world has obviously changed considerably since, we need a united Europe more than ever.

Today’s challenges are no longer to reconcile former enemies but to act and play together in a globalized world where we have to cope with existing and future superpowers.

It’s also to deal with long term questions like climate change, which will affect us and the next generations. The importance of such subjects in Cyprus, where the water question is already so crucial, needs not to be stressed.

As you know, the French EU presidency as well as the “trio” – that is, France and the two following presidencies: the Czech Republic

and Sweden – have put the these subjects as priorities for their 18 month agenda.

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One of the fundamental European values is freedom. This year, the UN will celebrate an important anniversary as it will be sixty years that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed, on 10 December 1948.

Although not a binding text, the Declaration represents an essential document as it affirms rights and freedoms for all men and women on this planet.

One of the main drafters of that document was René Cassin, 1968 Peace Nobel prize, an eminent jurist and a resistant during World War 2, and also a Jew, for whom it appeared particularly important, just three years after the war was over, that the first article of the declaration – “*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights*” - repeat nearly word for word the text adopted by the first French National Assembly, a few weeks after the 14 July 1789.

Therefore, many events will be organized, in France and in the world, notably at the UN, on the occasion of this 60th anniversary.

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Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

People need less time to comment on what's going well than on what's going wrong. That's why I need not take much more of your time to address the relation between Cyprus and France.

The quality of this relation has been again confirmed during the numerous official visits French Ministers, including the Prime Minister, made to Cyprus before our EU Presidency. History - old and recent - has created a particular chemistry between Cypriots and French. On European and international questions, our two countries are nearly all the time side by side.

In this regard, I must thank you, Mr. President, for your personal commitment and attentions to maintain and develop the excellent links between France and Cyprus.

Let me just thank you again for being with us tonight, particularly you, Mr. President and Madame Christofias.

My wife and I wish to all of you a very nice evening.

Très bonne soirée à tous,

Je vous remercie./.