



**ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ  
ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑΣ  
ΚΑΙ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΥ**

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**Address by the Minister of Education and Culture Mr Costas Kadis at the official opening  
of the Ministerial Conference "Securing democracy through education"  
Filoxenia Conference Centre, Nicosia**

The Republic of Cyprus has assumed the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe at a time when Europe and its neighborhood is faced with economic hardship, migratory flows, terrorism, the dangerous rise of populism, xenophobic rhetoric and extremism, and other phenomena which test our democracies and shake public trust in state and international institutions. It is, therefore, high time to invest more in stable and democratic institutions, transparent and fair processes, pluralistic and inclusive societies that foster tolerant and democratically active citizens. We also need to embrace the fundamental principles upon which the Council of Europe is founded on by safeguarding and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, strengthening democracy and upholding the rule of law. The Cyprus Chairmanship is convinced that, in overcoming current challenges, it is imperative that we remain committed to our common principles and values. That's why the Cypriot Chairmanship is focusing on three axes:

- a. Rights and freedoms for all people without any discrimination;
- b. Democratic citizenship; and
- c. Prevalence of the rule of law

Education plays a fundamental role in fostering inclusive, tolerant and democratic societies. The Ministry of Education has been very honoured to co-organize this Conference. The themes for discussion as well as the quality of the participants ensure that it will be both interesting and fruitful. We believe that it is very important to take this opportunity to bolster the relations of the Council of Europe with its southern neighbors.

The values of Council of Europe are important for all of us but I would like to highlight that they have an even more important significance for Cyprus. These values are for us the cornerstone upon which a solution to the ongoing Cyprus problem should be based. As you know, during the last two years a major effort to reunite Cyprus, aiming to allow to all its legal residents to enjoy human rights and live in peace, prosperity and progress, is in progress. To ensure a viable solution to the Cyprus problem, we consider the full adoption of the Council of Europe's principles and values in a reunited Cyprus very important. Our commitment to continue the dialogue to achieve such a solution that will ensure the peaceful coexistence of all Cypriots in their homeland, is continuous.

Dear colleagues,

At the entrance of the Conference hall you have seen an installation entitled the 'Immigrants' created by the pupils of Colossi Lyceum. The project has been awarded with the first prize of the international competition organized by the Saatchi Gallery/Deutsche Bank Art Prize for Schools 2016. It has also been awarded with the "2016 European Citizen's Prize" from the European Parliament. This installation depicts a sad reality and it also reminds us of the historical destiny of our island.

The rich history of our region has endowed us with the benefit of experiencing glorious civilizations since ancient times. At the same time, we have had the sad privilege to witness, in several occasions, people fleeing from conflict areas or, even worst, perishing in the effort to move to safer places. Therefore, it would be of utmost importance to discuss how strategic alliances can be developed at national, regional and international level towards promoting education as an inhibitor of violent extremism and radicalization and as an agent of peace. I'm confident the Ministerial Conference of the Cyprus Chairmanship will be pivotal in this endeavor. We can all play an active role in its success.