



Chairmanship of Cyprus

Council of Europe

November 2016 - May 2017

Présidence de Chypre

Conseil de l'Europe

Novembre 2016 - Mai 2017

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



Message of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus Mr Ioannis Kasoulides



It is a great honour and a privilege, as well as a duty undertaken with a great sense of responsibility, for Cyprus to assume the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. This is the fifth chairmanship for Cyprus since its accession to the Organisation in 1961.

Cyprus is called upon to assume the duties of chairmanship at a time when the European continent is facing unprecedented challenges that test the basis upon which the European architecture is founded. It is our strong conviction that these challenges can only be addressed by upholding our common European values of respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. At this time, the Council of Europe becomes even more relevant. The Cypriot Chairmanship aims at highlighting the role that the Council of Europe can play, drawing upon the expertise of the Organisation and the unique set of instruments developed by its various bodies.

Cyprus will do its utmost to further the work of the Organisation and promote the priorities set for the biennium 2016-2017. Cyprus is also dedicated to fostering the co-operation of the Organisation with other European and international bodies, as well as relations with neighbouring countries.

At the core of the priorities of the Cypriot Chairmanship is the protection of cultural heritage. Cyprus is very active in a number of international fora, promoting the protection of cultural property from deliberate destruction and unlawful looting. Culture, defined as the common heritage and cultural values of Europe, is an integral part of European identity and has been a priority for this Organisation since its establishment. In that light, the Cypriot Chairmanship will encourage and support the efforts of the Organisation to draft a new Convention on offences relating to cultural property. Cyprus will also host the launching of the "European Cultural Heritage Strategy of the Council of Europe for the 21st century."

The Cypriot Chairmanship is convinced that at this time of challenge, it is imperative that we remain committed to our common principles that define us as European. We must all work together to bolster the achievements of this Organisation and uphold the commitments that we have jointly undertaken.

Message of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe Mr Thorbjørn Jagland

I am delighted that the Republic of Cyprus has published this booklet on the occasion of its 6-month Chairmanship of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers. The pages which follow aim to familiarise readers in Cyprus with the Council of Europe, as well as familiarising the Council and its visitors with our current Chair.



Our Organisation was established in the aftermath of the Second World War, in order to help Europe build peace on new foundations: democracy, human rights and the rule of law. We are the guardians of the European Convention on Human Rights and home to the European Court of Human Rights. Our principal goal is to help our members deepen their “democratic security”, preventing the abuses of power which lead to upheaval and insecurity, and fostering tolerant and inclusive societies.

In 1961 Cyprus became our 16th member. Today our membership comprises 47 European states, stretching the length of the continent, and our mission is more important than ever. Rising xenophobia, ongoing economic hardship and the surge in extremism pose very real threats to our democracies, and trust in state institutions and international organisations is at an all time low. The Council of Europe is therefore redoubling our efforts to help Europe's nations build and maintain effective and credible democracies which place citizens' interests ahead of vested interests, command public confidence, encourage participation and promote mutual respect among their members. We seek to help states guarantee robust checks and balances across their democratic institutions, as well as ensuring equality before the law, the protection of minorities and the implementation of social rights, such as access to education and housing. We are champions of freedom of expression and firm believers in the value of free and plural media.

I have every confidence that Cyprus will embrace these principles and aims during its time at the helm of the Committee of Ministers. The country brings a unique and valuable perspective which can, I believe, prove extremely valuable in these fragmented times in Europe. I wish Cyprus all the best for its Chairmanship.



Cyprus and the Council of Europe

The **Council of Europe** is a regional intergovernmental organisation founded in 1949, in the context of the new European architecture set up to ensure greater unity between European countries and to avoid repetition of disastrous conflicts on the continent. The Organisation is based on three founding pillars, that is the protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The Council of Europe sits in Strasbourg.

Cyprus became the 16th member of the Council of Europe when it acceded to the Organisation on 24th May 1961. Today the Organisation has 47 member states. Five states have observer status. Membership of the Organisation requires acceptance of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Statute of the Organisation.

The **Committee of Ministers** is the decision-making body of the Council of Europe. Established by the Statute of the Organisation, the Committee is composed of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the 47 member states. The Ministers meet once every year. **The Ministers' Deputies**, that is the Permanent Representatives of states to the Council of Europe, are appointed by the Ministers to represent them in the day to day workings of the Council of Europe. The Ministers' Deputies meet once a week. The work of the Ministers' Deputies is supported by a Bureau, Rapporteur Groups, thematic co-ordinators and intergovernmental groups of government experts. These are working structures with no decision-making powers, that prepare the issues to be considered by the Minister's Deputies for a decision.

The Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers is held successively by member-states in alphabetical order for a period of six months. Cyprus assumes its **5th Chairmanship** of the Committee of Ministers on **22 November 2016 until 19 May 2017**.

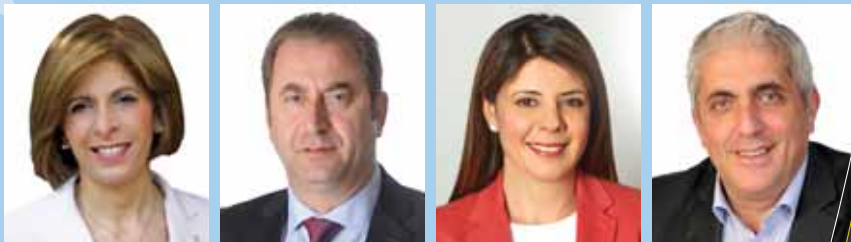


The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus and Chairman of the Committee of Ministers is Mr Ioannis Kasoulides and the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Cyprus to the Council of Europe is Mrs Theodora Constantinidou.

During the last Cypriot Chairmanship, 10 November 1994 to 11 May 1995, the Committee of Ministers dealt with major issues, such as ensuring democratic security through the accession of new members to the Organisation and the effective implementation of the commitments undertaken by the member-states upon accession to the Organisation. Cyprus held the Chairmanship also in the periods 24 April to 11 December 1967, 6 May to 28 November 1974 and 28 April to 24 November 1983.

The **Parliamentary Assembly** is the second organ of the Council of Europe set up by its Statute. The mission of the Parliamentary Assembly is to uphold the shared values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law that are the “common heritage” of the peoples of Europe. It brings together 324 members of the national parliaments of the Council of Europe’s 47 member states, who represent 800 million European citizens, reflecting political opinion across the continent. Other than its advisory role, exemplified through the adoption of Opinions, Recommendations and Resolutions notified to the Committee of Ministers, PACE is the organ which appoints the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the Commissioner for Human Rights and the Judges of the European Court of Human Rights, on the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers. The Parliamentary Session lasts for a calendar year. The Plenary meets four times a year (January, April, June and October) in Strasbourg.

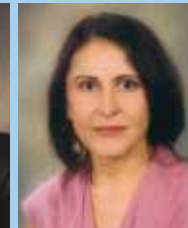
Countries are represented in the Assembly according to the size of their population. Cyprus has been allocated 3 seats. Currently, Cyprus is represented by 2 representatives and 2 substitutes, members of the Cypriot Parliament: Ms Stella Kyriakides (head of the delegation), Mr George Loucaides, Ms Christiana Erotokritou and Mr Constantinos Efstathiou.



Representatives of the Turkish Cypriot community participate in the works of the Assembly in accordance with PACE Resolution 1376 (2004).

The **Secretary General** is responsible for the strategic management of the Organisation. He prepares and manages the budget adopted by the Committee of Ministers. He is responsible for the overall coordination and strategic planning of the Council of Europe. The Secretary General is appointed for a term of 5 years. He can be re-elected for an additional term. Since 2009 the Secretary General of the Council of Europe is Mr Thorbjørn Jagland from Norway.

The **Congress of Local and Regional Authorities** of the Council of Europe is a consultative body set up in 1994, pursuant to Statutory Resolution 94(3) of the Committee of Ministers. It is a pan-European political assembly, comprised of 648 members holding elective office or a mandate as a person directly responsible to a local or regional body. The Congress represents over 200,000 authorities in 47 European states. Its role is to promote the participation of local and regional authorities in the implementation of the ideal of European unity and the work of the Council, to promote local and regional democracy and to improve co-operation between local and regional authorities. The Congress has two bodies – the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions. The Congress holds two Plenary Sessions a year (March and October) in Strasbourg. Cyprus is represented in the Congress with 3 members and 3 substitutes, namely: Mr Stavros Yerolatsites (head of delegation), Ms Efterpi Orphanidou and Mr Lefteris Perikli (members), Ms Anna-Maria Kremmou, Ms Froso Armosti and Mr Marios Zachariades (substitutes).



Representatives of the Turkish Cypriot Community are involved in the work of the Congress in accordance with Congress Resolution 170 (2004).

The **European Court of Human Rights** is the judicial body of the Council of Europe, with a mission to uphold respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights in the member states. The Court examines applications against Council of Europe member states brought by individuals or other member states. Member states have an unconditional obligation to enforce the Court's judgements, undertaken upon accession to the Organisation.

This provision renders the European Court of Human Rights the most effective legal mechanism for the protection of human rights globally.

The Honourable Georgios Serghides is the Cypriot Judge elected in 2016 to serve in the Court for a tenure of 9 years.



The Commissioner for Human Rights is an independent institution within the Council of Europe, mandated to promote awareness of and respect for human rights in the 47 Council of Europe member states. The Commissioner's work thus focuses on encouraging reform measures to achieve tangible improvement in the area of human rights promotion and protection. The Commissioner co-operates with a broad range of international and national institutions as well as human rights monitoring mechanisms. The Office's most important inter-governmental partners include the United Nations and its specialised offices, the European Union, and the OSCE. The Office also cooperates closely with leading human rights NGOs, universities and think-tanks. The Commissioner makes recommendation on the prevention of human rights violations and publishes opinions, thematic documents and reports. He also has the right to intervene as third party in cases before the European Court of Human Rights. The Commissioner for Human Rights is elected for a period of five years. Currently, the Commissioner for Human Rights is Mr Nils Muižnieks from Latvia.

Cyprus is active in promoting the work of the Council of Europe, as well as in enforcing domestically the values and legal instruments of the Organization, in guaranteeing to its citizens human rights and fundamental freedoms. Cyprus has signed and ratified 135 Conventions of the Council of Europe, covering a multitude of topics, such as the protection of social rights, the rights of minorities, gender equality, combating intolerance, racism and xenophobia, combatting human trafficking, money laundering, organized crime, violence against women, protection of children, protection of culture and the landscape.

Cyprus is also a member to all partial and enlarged partial agreements, regulating enhanced co-operation between states in the framework of the Council of Europe, such as, the Council of Europe Development Bank, the European Pharmacopeia, the Pompidou Group (combatting drugs), the North South Center, Youth Mobility, Cultural Routes, EPAS, GRECO (Group of States against Corruption) and the Venice Commission.



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For more information on Cyprus as a member state
of the Council of Europe, visit the website of the Council of Europe
(<http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/cyprus>).



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