



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL  
THE PRESIDENT**



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**Speech by Herman Van Rompuy  
President of the European Council  
at the Official Opening Ceremony of the Cyprus Presidency  
of the Council of the European Union**

It is a great pleasure and honour to address you today in such a historic, and scenic, location. I cannot imagine a better setting to witness Cyprus' début in this leading role: the Presidency of the Council, at the centre stage of the European Union.

Your country is taking on this important responsibility in a decisive moment in the History of our Union. Our continent is facing huge socio-economic challenges. To overcome them, we have to make important choices, some of which will bring unprecedented changes to the way we work as a Union. If we want to shape our future, we must shape this change – it is the only way forward.

In the months ahead, there is much to be done, bringing all countries and institutions together in a common effort for growth, jobs and stability, and Cyprus is going to play an important part.

Your Presidency has set itself a goal which I share: to work towards a better Europe, a Europe of hope. Together, we will share this common role: to ensure that Europe, again, becomes a symbol of hope. A symbol of opportunity, fairness, and achievement. Of a better future for all.

Your contribution will be in the limelight: for the coming six months, not only are you in the Union, you are the Union. I hope this will be a proud moment – a moment of European belonging – for all the citizens of this island.

**P R E S S**

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Cyprus can count on my personal support and on that of the European Union in the efforts to reach a settlement. This will require strong political will and a sense of conciliation from all involved.

Overcoming this division is of momentous importance for our Union: as long as Cyprus is divided, in a way Europe will be divided. Bridging this divide will pave the way towards a better future for Cyprus, and make of Cyprus a symbol of hope.

I am looking forward to working together for "a better Europe" with the Cyprus Presidency. We will face many problems but I am confident that we will overcome them.

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