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| **Statement by the President of the Republic, Mr N. Anastasiades, after the completion of the European Council****20/12/2013** |
| The deliberations of the European Council were just concluded. As you are already aware, the focus of the discussions was on the Common Security and Defense Policy and the Economic and Monetary Union. Conclusions concerning the social dimension of the Economic and Monetary Union, the Economic and Social Policy, enlargement as well as immigration and energy were also approved.The initiative of President Herman Van Rompuy to invite NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and put for discussion issues of the Common Security and Defense Policy was welcomed by all Member States. Fifteen years after the Saint Malo Summit, it was necessary to delineate the strategic parameters to further strengthen it.An autonomous, multifarious and efficient Common European Security and Defense Policy is an integral tool of our common foreign policy. It strengthens our ability, as Europeans, to provide security in our neighborhood. At the same time, it allows us to cooperate efficiently and multiplicative with international organizations and third party partners.During the discussion, and in response to a question by Chancellor Angela Merkel, NATO Secretary General referred to the cooperation problems between EU and NATO. He emphasized that, despite the fact that the military sector cooperation is achieved, however, in the political field there are problems stemming from the unsolved Cyprus problem.Seizing the opportunity, I intervened, referring to the current phase of the Cyprus problem, and the need for the EU to assist and contribute for the termination of an intolerable situation prevailing in a European country for the last 39 years.I briefed on the Greek Cypriot side's determination to work for a speedy solution to the Cyprus problem, based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with a single sovereignty and international personality and a single citizenship to safeguard the human rights of all citizens, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, and the fundamental principles and values of the European Union.At the same time, I informed them on the current phase and the difficulties we face on the resumption of the dialogue as a result of the unacceptable provisions that the other side is trying to include in the Joint Statement.To achieve a solution and eliminate the cooperation problems between the EU and NATO the European Union must have a more active involvement and participation to the efforts made.Before my intervention, in a private meeting with NATO Secretary General, I briefed him on the current phase of the Cyprus problem and the problems we are facing. I reiterated our intention to join the Partnership for Peace and that we should find a way to overcome the problems with Turkey.With regard to the Conclusions on the economic and monetary union, we believe that the foundations for taking ambitious decisions in the coming months are set. They will contribute to our efforts to enhance growth, employment and competitiveness. The approach taken to ensure that decisions take account of national procedures and economic and social conditions prevailing in each Member State, find us conforming.In this context, we believe that recent decisions regarding the Banking Union are essential steps in the efforts towards restoring the confidence of depositors and investors in the banking sector of the EU in order to improve financing conditions for SMEs and tackle the problem of fragmentation of the internal market. The further strengthening of the regulatory framework of the financial sector is essential. It will equip authorities with common and effective powers and tools for quick response in confronting banking crises, avoiding this way the burdening on taxpayers .Conclusions on Migration reflect our views and concerns. Cyprus along with other Mediterranean Member States are at the forefront of the problem of trafficking and migration, and we believe that any measures to tackle the increased challenges and disproportionate pressures of the Mediterranean, should be based on the principle of solidarity and a balanced burden sharing. Equally important to us is the development of an integrated and horizontal approach that combines all relevant European policies.The European Council was also informed on the two Progress Reports on the external dimension of energy policy and the integration of the internal energy market.Both are important for Cyprus. Especially for the external dimension of energy policy, I want to note that the role Eastern Mediterranean countries, including Cyprus, in the security of energy supply of the European Union is being acknowledged. The strengthening of our relations with neighboring countries, such as Israel, Egypt and Lebanon, will not only lead to economic growth, but may also contribute to the political stability of the wider region.The European Council adopted, without debate, the conclusions of the General Affairs Council concerning enlargement.The conclusions on Turkey are deemed positive and they include all the elements relating to Turkey's obligations towards the European Union associated with Cyprus. An important new element of the conclusions is the added reference on Turkey’s obligation to respect the sovereignty of all Member States in their territorial waters.We are also pleased about the opening of accession negotiations with Serbia in early 2014.Finally I would like to mention that at the sidelines of both the European Council and of yesterday's meeting of the European People's Party, I had contacts with several European leaders such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Francois Hollande and British Prime Minister David Cameron and also with the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy, the President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso, whom I briefed in relation to the latest developments in the efforts to reach a joint statement. |

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