

Τετάρτη, 2 Ιουλίου 2014

PM Samaras' Statements

Ομιλία Πρωθυπουργού της Ελλάδας, Αντώνη Σαμαρά, στο Ευρωκοινοβούλιο

Για τον απολογισμό της Ελληνικής Προεδρίας

Κύριε Πρόεδρε του Ευρωπαϊκού Κοινοβουλίου, κυρίες και κύριοι Ευρωβουλευτές,

Θέλω κ. Πρόεδρε στη αρχή να σας συγχαρώ για την εκ νέου εκλογή σας, αλλά και για τη συνέπεια, την αγωνιστικότητα και τη δύναμη της πίστης σας στην ενωμένη Ευρώπη.

Θέλω, επίσης, να συγχαρώ τον παρευρισκόμενο κ. Barroso για την προσήλωσή του στο Ευρωπαϊκό Ιδεώδες και την τόσο πετυχημένη παρουσία του ως Προέδρου της Επιτροπής. Και οφείλω να πω ότι χαίρομαι ιδιαίτερα που το Ευρωπαϊκό Συμβούλιο τώρα με τη συνθήκη της Λισαβόνας και το νέο τρόπο εκλογής, πρότεινε στην Ευρωβουλή την υποψηφιότητα του Jean – Claude Juncker, ενός αφοσιωμένου Ευρωπαίου, εγνωσμένης αξίας, πείρας και ικανότητας.

Αγαπητοί φίλοι,

Είναι για μένα μια ιδιαίτερη συγκίνηση να βρίσκομαι σήμερα εδώ, σε ένα χώρο γνώριμο, που τον νιώθω πραγματικά σαν να είναι σπίτι μου. Υπήρξα ευρωβουλευτής σε αυτά ακριβώς τα έδρανα όπου βρίσκεστε εσείς. Πριν δέκα ακριβώς χρόνια...

Πάλεψα για τα ίδια ιδανικά, για το κοινό μέλλον, δηλαδή, των λαών της Ευρώπης.

Και μάλιστα, πολλά απ' αυτά που σήμερα θεωρούνται «δεδομένα» για όλους, τότε ήταν αδιανόητα για οποιονδήποτε.

Γιατί το Ευρωπαϊκό εγχείρημα είναι ζωντανό! Έχει ελλείψεις, έχει αδυναμίες, προχωράει άνισα...

Αλλά προχωράει! Και μάλιστα, πολλές φορές, θα έλεγα, με θεαματικά άλματα...

Κι αυτό μπορεί κανείς να το διαπιστώσει, μόνον αν δει τα πράγματα από κάποια απόσταση.

Πράγματι, υπάρχει αλματώδης πρόοδος, από τη μια δεκαετία στην άλλη.

Μέσα σε μια γενιά έγιναν όσα λίγοι πίστευαν, κι ακόμα λιγότεροι περίμεναν, μερικές δεκαετίες πριν.

Κι ο ρυθμός της Ευρωπαϊκής Ενοποίησης επιταχύνεται συνεχώς.

Με συγκίνηση λοιπόν, σας καλωσορίζω όλους τους νέους συναδέλφους κι εύχομαι καλή επιτυχία στην καινούργια σταδιοδρομία σας.

Πολύ περισσότερο, που σήμερα βρίσκομαι εδώ για να σας παρουσιάσω τα αποτελέσματα μας, της Προεδρίας μας, της Ελληνικής Προεδρίας.

So, I will now switch, if you allow me, to English.

Our priorities in our 6month Presidency, were the following:

* Firstly, to tackle euro's architectural deficiencies, as evidenced by the crisis. Mainly to deepen the EMU. So, the conclusion of the Single Resolution Mechanism Regulation (SRM), together with the Inter-Governmental Agreement on the Single Resolution Fund (SRF), constitute a major step towards the completion of the Banking Union. Our monetary Union is now much better equipped to avoid future crises and better prepared to face them if they do happen.

* Then, on Jobs and Growth: (a) the approval of the own resources legislative package will ensure timely and steady financing of EU policies (b) the adoption of legislation, in the framework of the Single Market Act I and II, has further contributed to improving competitiveness. It facilitates and safeguards the economic activity of our citizens and businesses. I will just mention here: (i) the Regulation on e-business and e-commerce, (ii) the Directives on the posting of workers, (iii) the electronic invoicing in public procurement, and (iv) the disclosure of non-financial information of businesses, also very important in fighting tax evasion.

Further on, agreement was reached on the participation of the Union in the capital increase of the European Investment Fund (EIF). This means more liquidity to restore normal lending to the economy, in particular to SMEs. Important investment files were also concluded, while progress was made in the fields of telecommunications and infrastructure.

Better funding, more market flexibility, more access to the markets by everyone, more access to liquidity by SME's, more transparency across our Union, all these are different aspects of two things: more integration and more competitiveness. In other words, better prospects for job creation, employment, growth and prosperity. Especially at times when huge unemployment levels threaten a fragile social cohesion in many of our member states.

* Thirdly, border and migration management. This presents major challenges not only for the European South but, indeed, for the whole of the EU; with far reaching repercussions on economic growth and social cohesion. Important achievements here were (a) the revision of the list of countries requiring visa to enter the EU, allowing thus citizens of around 20 third countries to travel to the EU without visa, and (b) the adoption of the Directive on the conditions of entry and stay of third-country nationals in the context of Intra-Corporate Transfer (ICT) as well as, of course (c) the new FRONTEX Regulation.

A major breakthrough was the adoption of the Post Stockholm Strategic Guidelines in the area of Freedom, Security and Justice which focuses attention on (a) the implementation of the principle of solidarity in the areas of asylum, border and migration management, (b) the linkage between migration and the Union's foreign policy (that is cooperation with third countries, "more for more" principle), (c) the development of effective return, readmission and visa policies, and a continuous attention to an effective internal security framework.

*Fourthly, the horizontal thematic of the Hellenic Presidency has been to redefine and relaunch EU maritime policies in all their aspects, including security, growth and energy. A key component is the European Maritime Security Strategy. It is the first time that the EU is developing a holistic, cross-sectoral strategy of this kind, which will result in better protecting and promoting security and economic interests of EU and its member states at sea. It defines strategic interests and threats in the global maritime domain. The Strategy promotes EU principles and values, the Rule of Law, democracy,

respect for human rights, energy efficiency and security and a rule- based approach to maritime security, as reflected in the UN International Law of the Sea.

* At the institutional level, the adoption of the Regulation on the statute and funding of European political parties and foundations is also a qualitative leap for European representative democracy, through truly European political parties. And I congratulate the Parliament for voting this.

* Particular attention was also paid to enlargement, thus renewing relevant EU interest, while confirming the engagement of those countries to fulfill the accession criteria. A week ago Albania was awarded candidate status, whereas five months ago accession negotiations started with Serbia. Concerning Turkey, in the framework of the EU-Turkey Association Council, it has been underlined that Turkey's EU path depends on her fulfilling her EU obligations related to Cyprus.

All in all, the Greek Presidency concluded 67 pieces of legislation and advanced another 15 legislative initiatives, where consensus was achieved between the Commission and the Council. This was done in 4 months, instead of the usual duration of 6 months, because of the Euro-election. And we did it with a minimal budget of which not more than 40% was finally spent!

Now, we are particularly happy that the Next Presidency, the Italian Presidency, will take the lead and push all policies and initiatives further. We are very hopeful and optimistic that they will exceed all expectations. So that the year 2014, will be regarded by everybody as a very successful, Mediterranean year; a proud year for every European citizen!

Dear friends,

In the last three years, my country has been seriously challenged. Europe was also challenged...

Some were predicting the so called Grexit, the idea that Greece should exit the euro! Some were predicting that the euro itself would not make it either...

We proved them wrong! Europe worked. Our Union has problems, but is also has the capacity to solve those problems and go ahead.

We proved our peoples across our Union can work together and construct their common future.

In times of prosperity, obviously, but also during trying and very difficult moments of crisis.

We proved that peoples across our Union can change their countries in making them more fit and more competitive. That they can successfully demand change in our Union, to make it stronger, safer, with more competitive economies and more stable democracies.

In the last Euro-elections, the European peoples did not vote against Europe!

On the contrary, they voted for more Europe and better Europe!

I believe we have already started delivering. Although we have still a long way to go...

But we have to do more than that. We have to bring our Union closer to the hearts of the Europeans.

To prove that our Union is not a series of bureaucratic procedures nobody can follow; it is mainly about common prospects and common ideals that everybody shares and can understand right away.

Just a hundred years ago, a devastating war started here. It was not the only one in the years to come.

It was dreadful, but not the worst one, either. Our peoples suffered again and again, one tragedy after another for decades.

Now Europe is the most united we ever had. The most democratic we ever had. The most prosperous and more stable we ever had. In centuries!

Yet our people need to be inspired by our Union and by its prospects.

They need to feel our Union closer to their hearts.

I believe this is your first and foremost priority, here, in the Euro-parliament:

To bring our Union, closer to the hearts of our peoples!

Because you, in our Euro-parliament-- you are indeed the very heart of our Union!

Σας ευχαριστώ. Thank you.

Closing Remarks

Κλείσιμο Πρωθυπουργού της Ελλάδας, Αντώνη Σαμαρά, στο Ευρωκοινοβούλιο

Απαντήσεις στις τοποθετήσεις Ευρωβουλευτών

I would like to thank our honorable members for positive comments that were presented on our Greek Presidency, especially on the European maritime security strategy which I have to say includes maritime zones and the respect for the international law of the sea. And also I would like to thank colleagues for talking about solutions that have been provided for the Euro's architectural deficiencies that have existed. I am sorry that indeed, as a colleague has said, emphasis was given mostly on Greece not on Europe. I think some answers are indeed deserved. In 2010 when the Greek debt crisis surfaced our monetary union that had no instruments to face it was totally unprepared for that. There was no ESM, no EFSF, no SRM, no SRF, nothing. And I believe that we are now prepared better to avert similar crisis before they happen. To face them if indeed they do happen. I have to say that if we were to rewrite now our road map out of the crisis, everyone accepts we would do it differently and I was among the ones who criticizes the policy mix right for the very beginning. But my position as Prime Minister of my country after July 2012 was not to criticize a policy mix or to engage an academic discussion but the perfect path to stabilization. But my problem was to save my country, given all the mistakes of the past and all the structural problems of our Presidency. And we modified what could be modified, we implemented what should be implemented and we ended up delivering results. It was not easy, it was not painless. We achieved dear friends, the largest fiscal adjustment ever at the shortest time ever. We corrected our fiscal deficit by 8% of our GDP in two years. We stabilized the collapsing economy, we produced a primary surplus one year ahead of our program. We came out in the international markets much earlier than anybody could think about only six months ago. And despite the strict austerity measures, we reversed the trend of unemployment which is now falling. We are putting an end to a six years long recession. And we are now entering recovery and the forecasts for our robust growth for the following year is there. Yes, Greeks have suffered a lot, and yes, people in my country are still suffering. This is the first time and this is the first thing I kept on saying every time I met a foreign leader in the past four years. But things are now improving. In just two years we took over. In a few years I believe this is going to be a bad memory. But take - if you want - the opposite example of Argentina, a very rich country that went bankrupt back in 2002. 12 years later today they are still in a crisis, on the verge of a collapse again. Much more suffering and no hope. This is what we did not want to happen in Greece and we did it with the sacrifices and the maturity of the Greek people and the determination of my government.

Some people did not want anything to change in Greece. Some people are still doing everything they can to block changes. To block privatization projects. To scare away investors. To keep the country in the misery trap we are trying to come out from. And some people try to use the Greek crisis as a

pretext to bring us out of the Euro. Or to use the architectural defects of the Euro as a pretext to demolish the Euro all together. We did not let them do it and we are very proud we did not, because things are indeed improving in Greece, where we are coming out of the worst crisis we had for decades.

And I would like to answer to some MEPs that I do not have to apologize to extremists or populists of any sort. I only serve the interest of my country. I do not want and I do not have to apologize to people who do not anything to change, who try to block – as I said before – investors, privatizations and I think it is beyond the dignity of my country, it is beyond the dignity of any country to live on borrowed money. And we have put an end to it and doing so, I believe, we serve the best interest of my country.

Now, on something that was heard earlier. Greece is a Democracy and Democracies prosecute actions, democracies do not prosecute convictions. Members of the Golden Dawn are prosecuted by the Independent Judiciary, because of their involvement on criminal acts. We take Law and Order very seriously, without Law and Order no Democracy can stand. Golden Dawn is prosecuted as a criminal organization, because of its alleged involvement in crimes. And Greece has suffered from a devastating occupation by the Nazis 70 years ago. They were the worst tyrants the Greeks ever knew. Their admirers and their supporters are totally unacceptable, but I have to repeat that the leaders of the Golden Dawn are persecuted for what they do, not for what they believe in. They are persecuted by the Justice, not by the government. And this is the way it should be for any Democracy in the world.

One last point, Mr. President, regarding the crisis in the Ukraine. The Presidency in close cooperation with the Commission and the external action service, followed the “2 track” approach, which is political solution and more sanctions if required.

And I would like to finish by saying that we are already in a continuous cooperation with the coming Italian Presidency for the next semester, which I am sure will be, must be a very successful one.

Thank you very much again.