

**Video message
President Barroso
51th COSAC Plenary Meeting
Athens
16 June 2014**

Honourable Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament,
Vangelis Meimarakis,

Honourable Members of national Parliaments,

I am sorry I cannot be with you today in person but I am delighted to send greetings to each of you as you come together in Athens for the 51st COSAC plenary meeting.

The economic and financial crisis has put our European model to the greatest stress test in the history of European integration. Many people even predicted that the Euro area would break-up. But we have proven them wrong. European institutions and Member States stuck together and supported each other.

Against the back-drop of unprecedented solidarity among Euro area members, we took the necessary measures for fiscal consolidation, correcting macro-economic imbalances, and ensuring financial stability – all prerequisites for sustainable growth.

The efforts and sacrifices made across Europe have been and in some cases continue to be a painful but unavoidable process.

Today we see that these efforts have started to pay off. Notably in Greece but also in Cyprus we see signs of recovery. Ireland and Portugal have smoothly emerged from their adjustment programmes; while Spain has left the special programme for its banks. Let us not forget the enormous efforts of a country like Latvia. I want to pay tribute to these countries and to the people who stand behind these efforts.

But Europe's economic recovery still remains too slow, fragile and uneven. The social cost of the crisis is very high. Compared to 2008, there are now 6.6 million more people at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Unemployment, especially among young people, remains at unacceptable levels.

The outcome of the European elections is crystal clear: European citizens want growth and jobs, social fairness and a better quality of life – for today and for the future. I therefore welcome that social concerns are at the centre of your meeting.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our main political priority is to fully deliver on the reforms we have pledged to without the pressure of the crisis bearing down on us. We owe it to our citizens to step up our efforts.

Next year marks the halfway point and an important opportunity if necessary to review our Europe 2020 Strategy for growth and jobs.

That is why we launched a public consultation until end-October on what Europe 2020 could do better in the next five years. Your contributions, your commitment and ultimately your support, from the national parliaments of the European Union as a whole, will be essential so that together we can leave this crisis behind and move towards a better future.

This is about joining forces in the interest of each and every one of your countries. This is about reinforcing responsibility and solidarity within the European Union.

You are all members of your national Parliaments. But you are all European politicians as well. Your action or your non-action affects all of us.

This is why I salute your work and your commitment in COSAC, and wish you a successful meeting in a true European spirit.