



REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



Nicosia, 23 September 2014

Mr. Martin Chungong,
Secretary-General,
Inter-Parliamentary Union,
Geneva.

Dear Secretary General,

International Day of Democracy - Cyprus House of Representatives

Regarding the above mentioned subject and in the context of the celebrations for the International Day of Democracy for all IPU member-parliaments, please find attached hereto the translated text of a reference made by the Acting President of the Cyprus House of Representatives, Mr. Sophoclis Fittis, before the House Plenary, today. We would be grateful if this could be posted on the IPU website.

Yours sincerely,

Evie Hadjiyianni,
Director, International Relations Service.

**REFERENCE BY THE ACTING PRESIDENT OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS,
MR. SOPHOCLIS FITTIS,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY
Tuesday, 23 September 2014**

We honour today the International Day of Democracy, established by the UN in 2007, to be celebrated on 15 September, in the context of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Democracy by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and focusing this year on the theme of "Engaging youth on democracy".

The International Day of Democracy provides an opportunity for the Cyprus House of Representatives and other parliaments around the world to redefine and enhance their position in the global political arena, on the basis of the principles and values that support and strengthen Democracy, primarily by assessing the degree of citizens' engagement in political life, particularly of young people, who are the ones holding the future of Democracy and their countries in their own hands.

Young people today face the challenges of rapid social and political global change. Discussions on various issues, which contemporary societies are faced with and which directly relate and affect young people, unfortunately find our youth absent, mainly due to their belief that their aspirations and views are ignored by the existing social and political system.

Consequently, it is our duty, as democratically elected representatives of our citizens' rights and interests to coordinate our efforts, in order to assist the participation of youth in decision making processes through appropriate structures and methods. To this end, the voting age was lowered to 18 years. Nevertheless, an increasing indifference of youth has been recorded in recent years, not without reason. Corruption, the downfall of institutions, , the lack of confidence in the system in general, constitute pan-European and global phenomena.

Closer and more substantive contacts with citizens remain our top priority. In this context, the House of Representatives and its Members have utilized several new technologies and are willing to strive even further in this direction. A very useful institution that we initiated some years ago is also the Cyprus Children's Parliament, while at the same time the numerous visits of students to the Parliament are also valuable, in terms of bringing younger generations closer to active democracy.

In the case of Cyprus, the involvement of young people in the democratic process and in political life in general is of crucial importance. In a country that has been experiencing the Turkish occupation with all its consequences for 40 years, young people are expected to have a strong presence in public life, as any solution to the Cyprus problem will first and foremost have an impact on their future. Thus, we need to facilitate and encourage their engagement as best as we can.

Youth participation in democratic structures and political awareness should also rate high on the international political agenda, as a means to strengthen democracy, peace and stability in the world. And in this context, we are and will remain seized and actively and creatively present.