

**HOTREC
64th General Assembly
25-28 April 2012
Nicosia, Cyprus**



**Speech by Mr Haris Loizides,
President of the Cyprus Hotel Association**

Dear Mr President,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Cyprus Hotel Association, I would like to welcome you to HOTREC's 64th General Assembly, which we are honored to host this year in Cyprus. Our Association is excited to host such a remarkable event of pan-European magnitude and it gives me great pleasure to address such a distinguished audience.

The Cyprus Hotel Association is fully aware of the positive role HOTREC plays as an umbrella association representing the hospitality business industry in Europe, as well as its valuable role as an ambassador of the industry to the European Union. Just the fact that the industry includes 1,7 million businesses and provides around 10 million jobs in the European Union, while HOTREC represents the sector in 26 different European countries, underlines its significant contribution.

HOTREC's importance became even more vital after the Lisbon Treaty, of December 2009, which strengthened the EU competence in the area of tourism. Tourism is now one of the policy areas for which "The Union shall have competence to carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States".

We share the European Commission's 2010 goal for turning Europe into the world's No 1 tourist destination through

- Improving the competitiveness of the tourism sector in Europe;
- Promoting the continuous sustainable development of EU tourism;
- Enhancing Europe's image as home to sustainable and high quality destinations; and
- Maximizing the potential of EU policies and financial instruments for the development of European tourism.

We highlight in particular the goal of improving competitiveness, as competition from non EU countries is fierce and constitutes a real challenge for all of us here.

By recently becoming a full member of HOTREC, the Cyprus Hotel Association aspires to contribute to this pan-European goal and feels that Cyprus' cooperation with its European tourism partners is strengthened.

Hosting HOTREC's General Assembly only two months before Cyprus assumes the European Union Presidency, in combination with the arrival of top European Tourism Industry executives and many other distinguished participants, constitutes a great success, but also a heavy responsibility for our Association, due to the great opportunity these offer for the unique promotion of our island.

Dear guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

The upcoming European Union Presidency constitutes yet another challenge for Cyprus, a test to see whether we can operate with a vision, on the basis of collaboration between the public and private sectors. Firstly, we need to tackle effectively the ongoing financial crisis, especially in the Eurozone.

Secondly, on a local level, with the appropriate steps and decisions, the European Union Presidency in the second half of 2012 could boost the efforts to create the ideal tourist Cyprus of the 21st century. Our hotel infrastructure upgrade and modernization, the provision of high quality services and facilities and our exemplary hospitality, should be the main pillars on which Cyprus should build on from tomorrow and for the following months.

Last year's tourist season found Cyprus recovering with the tourist arrivals, recording a healthy increase, while hotel occupancy was quite satisfactory. Nevertheless, in no case should last year's results lead to complacency. In order to achieve continuity in the effort for the recovery of Cyprus tourism and of the National economy at large, we need solid and collective efforts, infrastructural projects and the undertaking of important initiatives.

The natural beauties of our land, such as the coastline, the beaches, the diversity of our landscape, the historical and cultural monuments, our traditional hospitality and quality of service to our visitors, in modern facilities and infrastructures, all constitute the main reasons people from different ethnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds visit Cyprus.

With our membership in HOTREC, we look forward to gaining experience and further improving our tourist product, as well as strengthening our voice within the EU. We, as the Cyprus Hotel Association, with its more than 75 years' history, stand ready to contribute constructively and creatively via collaborative work, towards the implementation of HOTREC's main vision.

Once again I welcome you all, and I wish everyone in the General Assembly success. In closing, I call upon all spearheading leaders of our industry, trade professionals and general entrepreneurs from all over Europe, to continue the hard work so that our business connection continues to thrive. For our part, we have every intention of doing exactly that.

Thank you.