**OPENING SPEECH BY THE HONOURABLE MR JUSTICE MYRON MICHAEL NICOLATOS, PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME COURT OF CYPRUS,**

**DURING THE VISIT OF THE HONOURABLE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COURT OF JUSTICE, BARON KOEN LENAERTS.**

**SUPREME COURT OF CYPRUS - 15th April, 2019.**

**Honourable President of the E.C.J.,**

**Honourable Minister of Justice,**

**Honourable Justices, Former Justices and Judges,**

**Excellencies,**

**Honourable Former Attorney-General,**

**Honourable President of the Cyprus Bar Association,**

**Distinguished Academics,**

**Dear Colleagues,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great pleasure and honour, indeed, for the Supreme Court of Cyprus to welcome today the Honourable President of the European Court of Justice, and his distinguished team, that includes the Cypriot Justices at the Court, and the General Court.

The European Union is a Union, profoundly, governed by Law and the European Court of Justice is the most important Court in the Union, for the formulation and development of European Union Law.

The Republic of Cyprus, independent since 1960, Member of the Council of Europe since 1961 and Full Member of the European Union since 2004 has, unfortunately, since 1974, a very large part of its territory under foreign military occupation. The continuing foreign occupation of about 37% of its territory infringes and violates many basic Human Rights, recognised and protected by the acquis communautaire, as well as by European and International Law.

The Republic of Cyprus, for the last 45 years is fighting, by all peaceful means, for the restoration of its sovereignty, on the whole of its territory, and for the protection of the Human Rights of all its lawful inhabitants. In these efforts, Cyprus is counting on the support of the whole European Union and especially on the European Court of Justice, the, par excellence, Trustee and Guardian of legality, in the Union.

Cyprus, Mr President, is the southeastern border of the European Union, geographically located in the Eastern Mediterranean, between three continents.

This important geostrategic position is, to a great extent, the main reason for the political and other problems of our country. At the same time, our geostrategic position is of great importance for the defence of Cardinal European and Western values, which form the Foundation of our civilasation, namely Democracy, Rule of Law (“Despot” Law as the ancient Greeks used to refer to it), and Human Rights, in this troubled part of the world. In the words of the Great Alexandrian Greek Poet, Constantinos Kavafis, we are “guarding Thermopylae”, i.e. we are defending our values, our country and our civilisation, with our lifes.

Despite the serious difficulties that resulted from the withdrawal of the Turkish Cypriot Community from all State Organs, in the sixties, and the continuing illegal occupation of the Northeastern part of Cyprus, by Turkey, since 1974, the Republic of Cyprus is a Country fully respecting the aforementioned Cardinal values.

The Judiciary of Cyprus, is an example of independence from the other two powers of the state, and it is also impartial and honest. Currently, our Judiciary is undergoing a major Reform, in order to become more efficient and deliver Justice more quickly. Such Judiciary guarantees and safeguards the Human Rights of all the people, without discrimination, and it is fully dedicated to the application of European Union Law, in all instances where such Law is applicable.

European Union Law, in accordance with our Constitution, enjoys supremacy even over our Constitution, and this supremacy is given full effect by our Courts in all appropriate cases. A good example of Cyprus΄s dedication and respect for European Union Law, is our case law, on European Warrants of Arrest, and the wide execution of such Warrants by our Courts, provided, of course, that the prerequisites are satisfied.

It is true that not many preliminary questions, on European Union Law, were submitted to the E.C.J., but this is not, in any way, an indication of any lack, of dedication and respect for the E.C.J.. It is, perhaps, and this is added with all due humility, the result of good understanding and knowledge of European Union Law, by our Courts, as well as our common law approach to Preliminary Questions, as explained by Lord Denning in the famous English case of ***Bulmer v. Bollinger***.

Mr President and distinguished Professor of Law, I warmly welcome you to Cyprus, a small country with centuries΄ long history and civilisation. Our country is the first country in the world, that was governed by a Christian Ruler, during the Roman Period. The Roman Governor Septimius Sevirus, was converted to Christianity by St. Paul, during one of his visits to Cyprus-Paphos. Cyprus-Kition (ancient Larnaca) is the birthplace of the important ancient Philosopher Zeno of Kition, who was the founder of Stoic philosophy (stoicism), in ancient Athens, in the 4th century B.C.. St Lazarus, the friend of Christ, after his resurrection by Christ, came to Cyprus and became the first Bishop of Kition (ancient Larnaca). The Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus is “Autocephalus” i.e. Autonomus since the 5th century A.C., a privilege granted, after proof that it was founded by St Barnabas, a Cypriot Apostle, who performed a miracle, practically demonstrating the triple nature of Divinity.

King Richard, Coeur de Lion, in the 12th century, got married, in Cyprus-Limassol, to the Spanish Princess Berengaria of Navarra, on his way to the Holy Land, in one of the Crusades. He was the only English King to be married outside England.

In much more recent times, distinguished Constitutional Lawyer Nicolaos Saripolos, who was born in Larnaca, in the 19th century, became one of the founding fathers of Greek Constitutional Law.

According to Greek Mythology, Aphrodite the Greek Goddes of Beauty and Love, was born in Cyprus, off the shores of Paphos, as Sandro Boticelly, so wonderfully, demonstrated in his famous painting, “the Birth of Venus” and “Europe”, the young and beautiful daughter of the King of Phoenicia in the Levant, when she was abducted by Zeus, who transformed himself into a flying Bull, for this purpose, flew over Cyprus, before reaching Crete, where she gave birth to Zeus΄s children, including King Minos, the Founder of Minoan Civilisation.

The famous myth of “Galateia and Pygmalion” takes place in ancient Paphos, whereas the Drama “Othello”, of Shakespeare, takes place in the beautiful town of Famagusta, at that time under Venetian Rule, and today occupied by Turkish Occupation Forces, since 1974.

The talented French poet Arthur Rimbaud, lived and worked in Cyprus, for a while, in the 19th century.

The famous French thinker and Laureate writer, Albert Camus, was so impressed by the Heroism of a very young Greek Cypriot Fighter for Independence who was sentenced to death, that he wrote a poem about him.

The famous British writer Daphne Du Maurier wrote part of her Novel “Rebecca” in Platres, a beautiful summer resort on Troodos Mountains. In the same place, the Greek Nobel Prize Laureate, Poet George Seferis, wrote his poem about “Platres”.

The well known British writer Laurence Durrell wrote his book “Bitter Lemons” in Kyrenia, now under Turkish Occupation.

According to Legend Leonardo Da Vinci visited the beautiful village of Lefkara.

Last but not least, Empress Theodora, wife of the Great Byzantine Emperor and Lawmaker Justinian, was a Cypriot.

This is only a small part of the rich History, Culture, Mythology and Legends surrounding our small island country.

We are greatly honoured by your visit to our Court, Mr President, and we welcome you, with the traditional Greek philoxenia “friendliness to the aliens”, that is inherent in our culture, since the classical antiquity. Mr President and Dear friend, please feel like a Cypriot, at home.

**Thank you.**