

## ANNEX

## Formal sitting

IN THE CHAIR: MR KLEPSCH

*President*

*(The formal sitting was opened at 12.35 p.m.)*

**Address by His Holiness, VARTHOLOMEOS I,  
Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople**

**President.** – Your Holiness, it is a great honour for me to receive you in the European Parliament. On behalf of the Members of this Assembly may I extend a warm welcome to you. We know and value the spiritual authority you hold as an ecumenical patriarch in the Orthodox Church, throughout the Christian world and for other religions too. Moreover, Your Holiness also enjoys great moral authority throughout the world thanks to your commitment to human dignity and life, to peace, social justice, reconciliation and tolerance. In an area torn apart by fraternal conflicts, Your Holiness, in your responsibility as pastor, has issued an urgent appeal for an immediate ceasefire and an end to all violence and for reconciliation. Your great interest in environmental protection and preservation, a subject to which Your Holiness devotes a message on 1 September each year, is also consistent with our Parliament's endeavours. It will endeavour to promote a development model that does justice to both man and nature.

Your Holiness, at a time when the construction of Europe, an objective that has deep spiritual roots for us, has reached a historic turning point, our Parliament awaits your message with great interest. I call Your Holiness.

*(Applause)*

**His Holiness Vartholomeos I, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople.** – *(EL)* Your Excellency Mr President, esteemed ladies and gentlemen Members of Parliament, it brings us great joy and deep satisfaction to be among you in this distinguished chamber of the European Parliament, which is perceived as the visible focus of the historic effort undertaken to unite Europe.

We give you heartfelt thanks for the invitation you extended to us. We thank you, Your Excellency Mr Egon Klepsch, President of the European Parliament, for the initiative of your invitation. And to you all, ladies and gentlemen Members of Parliament, our thanks for your presence.

You have the great and historic mission of orchestrating the unity of Europe's peoples, in peace, justice and democracy, which ultimately means in solidarity and love. It is a mission which clearly transcends the personal limitations of each one of you, but one that derives strength from the common efforts for a better world, for which reason we hope those efforts will continue.

The unification of Europe, to which you have devoted your abilities as representatives of the will of your peoples, is a familiar aspiration. It serves a tradition of seventeen whole centuries of care and effort for the salvation and unity of European culture. The ancient Patriarchate of New Rome-Constantinople, together with the other European power centre of Old Rome, have not been able to bring about this unity, a fact that grieves us deeply. However, we continue and indeed are united in holding to our initial testimony: That political unity, if separated from culture, in other words from the fundamental concept of human relations, cannot possibly lead to the achievement of a united Europe. The unity of Europe's peoples to which we aspire can only come about as unity in the fellowship of a common concept of life, the unique aim of human relations.

It is remarkable that the true and most profoundly democratic organization of the Orthodox Christian Church, with the pronounced degree of administrative autonomy and local sovereignty enjoyed by the Bishops, Patriarchates and Autocephalous Churches, and at the same time their profession of one single eucharistic faith, offers a kind of model that for the European Union that has recently been established in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, as the most advantageous method of structuring its powers.

Notwithstanding the vast changes in European History, Old and New Rome continue to be the points of reference and unity for Europe's culture. We are speaking of the fundamental concept of unity, not the ideological distortion of that concept by religious and political dogmas that often lead to an absolutism based upon nationalistic and racial character.

Permit us to hold to the belief that European union will not be possible if such absolutisms prevail. We know that at this time, to our person and to the Orthodox Catholic Church whose primatial diocese we serve, many of you express concern about the tragic reality of our times, a horrific war in which orthodox populations of Europe have become involved in conflict with neighbouring heterodox peoples of different faiths.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Orthodox Church in general respect the national traditions and sensitivities of peoples. However, we condemn in the most categorical way every type of fanaticism, illegitimacy and violence, no matter who perpetrates them. We firmly insist upon the need for free and peaceful communication between peoples, for mutual respect and peaceful coexistence between nations, as we stressed in the recent Bosphorus Declaration during the Conference on Peace and Tolerance convened on our initiative.

The lack of communication between the combatants and the UN forces in Gorazde confirms the urgent need for principles of humanity and a spirit of dialogue to prevail.

**His Holiness Vartholomeos I**

You will have gathered that we refer to the recent events in former Yugoslavia.

You are the main agents of European union. To you, as political leaders and indeed ones who exercise legislative authority, falls the responsibility to care for the weak and for minorities of all kinds, to guarantee freedom of thought and expression, and to enable people to move and settle wherever their physical, spiritual and social needs dictate. More generally indeed, to create conditions that will enable the furtherance of cooperation and unity between nations and peoples. Linked to that is the obligation to reduce and if possible eliminate the developmental inequality observed between the wealthy, developed world and the developing world. Because that inequality harbours a host of dangers for the future of mankind.

United Europe cannot be no more than a scheme for uniform economic development and a plan for common defence. It is in the nature of things that the vision also demands a uniform social policy of peaceful and fruitful cooperation between Europe's peoples. That is a cultural demand, one that embodies the concept of relations between people, relations of reciprocal tolerance for national traditions.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate of New Rome-Constantinople, which is today represented by our humble person here before you, ladies and gentlemen, does not convey to this Centre of European unity the possibility of political power, economic efficacy or ideological ambition. That is not our mission. Let us point out, however, that the experience of centuries paradoxically confirms that the forces which change history often act in gentle ways.

We testify to you the experience of our recent tradition: Namely, whenever we have ventured, in the concerns of the ecumenical unity of the Christian Churches, to act 'in strength' or even 'beyond strength', the fruit of our endeavours has been to call into play our weakness and not our strength. In 1920 the Ecumenical Patriarchate, on its own initiative and by means of a general encyclical, invited all the Christian Churches and Communions to form a kind of 'League of Churches' on the model of the then 'League of Nations', the precursor of the present United Nations Organization. From that initiative, thanks to the contribution of the protestant Persuasions as well, there emerged the World Council of Churches in which, despite existing weaknesses, the mutual tolerance of traditions, common philanthropy and the growth of mutual respect are being cultivated in our consciences.

A similar experience can be pointed to from the other initiative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to establish, in common with the other fraternal Orthodox Churches, a theological dialogue with the Ancient Eastern Churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the Old Catholic Church, the Anglicans, the Lutherans and the Reformed Churches. The older ones among you will perhaps remember the historic meeting between our predecessor, Patriarch Athenagoras of blessed memory, and Pope Paul VI of blessed memory, exactly 30 years ago in Jerusalem, the first meeting after the great Schism of the 11th century between the Heads of Old and New Rome. As indeed the lifting of the excommunications between those Churches in 1965 and the exchange of visits between Pope John-Paul II and Ecumenical Patriarch

Demetrius of blessed memory, our immediate predecessor.

We are continuing those efforts, and we recently extended them to attempt an inter-denominational approach. We convoked an international inter-denominational conference on the theme of 'Peace and Tolerance' at the seat of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. However, we are conscious that the cultivation of a climate of peaceful coexistence and creative cooperation, both between religions and churches and between nations, races and traditions, calls for a more radical change. Dialogue, international conferences, formal communications between leaders, approaches of goodwill and the rejection of intransigence are all positive and beneficial steps. However, they do not suffice. The problems of the modern world and those of Europe in particular, call for fundamental reviews of our cultural choices, in other words of the assumptions on which our cultural models are based.

Two emphatic examples bear witness to this need. The first is the tragedy of unemployment, the scourge of Europe today. It is clear that increasing unemployment cannot be dealt with either by moral exhortations, or by ad hoc measures of financial policy. The problem of unemployment demands that we radically reexamine certain priorities that our culture takes for granted: the absolute priority of so-called 'development', which is measured only in economic terms. We are caught in the tyrannical spiral of a continual need to increase production, and consequently, continually to create new and more numerous consumer needs. The balancing of these two needs entails the continual perfecting of productive means, with constant limitation of the productive force, in other words of manpower. Whereas in parallel, the consumer needs of that same manpower must continually be increased and broadened. Thus, the economy runs independently of the needs of the society it serves, functions in default of man, and develops into a mechanistic technique for the balancing of abstract quantities.

Perhaps it is time, even if only because of the acute problem of unemployment, to put first the priority of personal creativity in the society of human relations, in place of the concept of rights centred on the individual. The political management of our people must respond to the question: Who is to inspire today's European with the priority of human relations, and how? What political practice will persuade people today, willingly and gladly to sacrifice their extreme consumerism and their commitment to the dictates of limitless productivity, in order to rediscover the community of life in the society of men?

Such radical changes in the interpretation of human life are served by politics, but in the consciences of human beings they can only be consolidated by the conviction stemming from experience, conveyed by religious traditions. If there is truth in the classical and very widely known writings of Max Weber, Werner Sombart and R.H. Tawney, there is a specific acceptance of Christian theology at the core of modern European views on labour and the economy. If that is true, then a new proposed interpretation of labour and the economy will unavoidably emerge from theological review. The distortion of theology by various ideologies has persuaded nobody that it can offer realistic solutions. Behind the present impasses of European life, there lurks a theological attitude.

**His Holiness Vartholomeos I**

We think that similar conclusions follow from the second example of a critical and painful problem of our times: the ecological problem. We all know the nightmarish proportions it is assuming today.

Let us express the conviction that the ecological problem of our times demands a radical review of our cosmology. A different interpretation of matter and the universe, a different attitude of man to nature, a different concept of the extraction and utilization of material resources. Within the measure of its spiritual powers, the Orthodox Church and Theology strives to contribute to the necessary dialogue concerning this problem. On the initiative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Orthodox Christians have declared the 1st of September each year as a day for taking stock and a day of prayer on how to cope with the progressive ecological destruction of our planet. Besides, at an international conference in Crete, we initiated a systematic theological study of the problem. But our efforts will have no meaning if they remain fragmentary and isolated. We grasp the opportunity of our presence among you today, to state that we are ready to place whatever limited strength we have at the disposal of the European Parliament for any further study and effort towards a pan-European approach to the ecological problem. Allow us to assert the selfsame readiness in connection with the scourge of unemployment in Europe, mentioned earlier.

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen Members of Parliament, your courteous invitation to us has made it possible for us to enjoy this brief but precious moment of personal contact with you. We feel a sense of responsibility that is difficult to bear, because the few personal words we have spoken aspire to summarize the history and experience of some seventeen centuries of institutions functioning as the focus of European civilization's unity. We are charged to continue the succession of those who have served the Ecumenical Patriarchate of New Rome-Constantinople, to succeed towering figures such as Ioannis Chrysostome, Gregorius Theologus, Photius the Great, and many other Patriarchs of Constantinople who attained giant stature not only in ecclesiastical history, but in European history as well.

Historical circumstances have undergone a vast change. Please regard our presence here today as no more than a reminder of the fact that we exist. And we continue to

serve and bear witness in the common struggle to offer meaning and hope to all mankind. The cathedrals of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in every European country, the hundreds of parishes of Orthodox believers, both immigrant and native, in Central and Western Europe, constitute our flock but also the people on whose behalf you exercise the art of politics. Moreover, beyond the boundaries of today's twelve-nation European Community, many other countries are likely to align themselves with Europe, most of which subscribe to the orthodox Ecclesiastical Tradition. Allow us to express the hope that those peoples too will soon be invited to participate in the life and institutions of united Europe.

By virtue of its flock and as a fact of life, the Ecumenical Patriarchate continues to represent a substantial European dimension in its ecumenical ministry. Alongside the ideological orientations of each of you, and regardless of your metaphysical beliefs or disbeliefs, we ask you to accept the readiness of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to assist in your effort towards European union, towards a Europe which will exist not just to serve itself, but the welfare of mankind as a whole.

We would like to conclude with the prayer that we Orthodox address to the Prince of Peace, our Lord, especially during this period of Lent: 'Heavenly King, support our faith, pacify the nations, bring peace to the world'.

We thank you warmly.

*(Sustained applause)*

**President.** – Your Holiness, we are deeply moved by your words to us. Looking forward to the fourth general direct elections to the European Parliament, I hope with all my heart that we will be guided by the clear picture and spiritual values you have set out.

Our activities must always be governed by the need to protect and implement human rights and the tireless endeavour to secure a lasting peace, reconciliation, justice and democratic principles. Your Holiness has written a letter to each individual Member which will be distributed by messenger.

*(Applause)*

*(The formal sitting was closed at 1.05 p.m.)*