

*Nicosia, 10 December 2012*

**Mr Herman Van Rompuy**  
Rue de la Loi 175  
1048 Brussels

Dear President,

You will recall that the Stockholm Programme - an open and secure Europe serving and protecting citizens - was approved by the European Council at its meeting on 10/11 December 2009 with a view to continuing the development of the Union as an area of freedom security and justice serving and protecting EU citizens and those living in this area. The Stockholm Programme was intended to be a multiannual programme covering the period 2010-2014. The European Council, when adopting the Stockholm Programme (doc. 17024/09), also invited the Commission to submit a midterm review before June 2012.

The Cyprus Presidency, in keeping with that request, prepared an overview of the implementation of the Stockholm Programme (doc. 15921/12 + COR1 +ADD 1.) with a view to a comprehensive debate at the Justice and Home Affairs Council on 6 December. That overview covered all aspects of the Stockholm programme - asylum and migration, civil and criminal justice, internal security, civil protection and external relations in the JHA field.

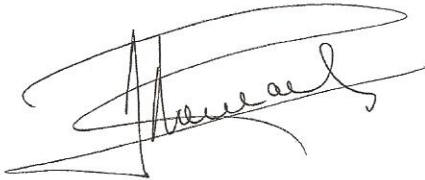
We believe that the outcome of the debate in the Council showed in general satisfaction with the progress made to date as well as confirmation of the need to take forward work on those elements of the Stockholm Programme, which remain outstanding in order to continue to secure for our citizens an area of freedom, security and justice. The usefulness of a programme such as the Stockholm Programme was also underlined by a number of delegations as a guideline for defining legislative and operational priorities.

During the Council meeting, Ministers also reiterated their commitment to maintaining the right balance between security concerns and the protection of individual rights. Priorities identified for the period ahead included the full implementation of EU legislation already agreed should be a key focus in the period ahead as will be the finalisation of measures under negotiation. Areas mentioned in this connection included, in particular, the legislation underpinning the Common European Asylum System and Schengen governance. There should be a continued focus on improving the control of the external borders, including through taking forward work on smart borders. The EU Action on Migratory Pressures, as well as the further development of cooperation in the area of return and readmission, are key priorities for the purpose of tackling illegal migration. Mutual recognition in civil and criminal matters shall remain the cornerstone of judicial cooperation in the EU. In this respect, the European Investigation Order is considered as a major tool to address cross-

border cases. The EU policy cycle on organised crime shall be promoted to foster operational cooperation in the field of internal security. The implementation of the principle of availability shall be further developed to strengthen law enforcement information exchange. Delegations highlighted that JHA policies should be coherent with other European Union policies.

We are aware of the importance, which the European Council attaches to progress in the area of Justice and Home Affairs, as well as its role in defining guidelines for legislative and operational planning within the area of freedom, security and justice, and therefore wished to bring the outcome of the debate to your attention.

Yours faithfully,



Loucas Louca  
Minister of Justice and  
Public Order



Eleni Mavrou  
Minister of Interior