

To the President of the European Parliament  
Mr. Martin Schulz

Athens, July 7, 2015

**Re: The need for Parliaments to guarantee full respect of democratic procedures and the protection of human rights in the European Union, in light of the recent Referendum held in Greece**

Mr. President,  
Dear colleague,

As you know, on July 5, 2015, pursuant to a decision by the Hellenic Parliament, the Hellenic Republic held a referendum on the framework set out in two documents (titled “Reforms for the completion of the current program and beyond” and “Preliminary Debt Sustainability Analysis for Greece”) tabled by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund on 25 June 2015. The Greek government had been given a 48-hour deadline (expiring on 27 June 2015) to respond. The Government, finding that the proposal consisted in terms and conditions which surpassed its recent mandate, did not accept the deadline and asked for the people to pronounce themselves on the documents, through a referendum. The referendum was decided after discussion held in the Parliament Plenary on 27-28 June 2015. The question addressed to the people was whether they accept or reject the above documents, which the government had been asked to accept or reject on their behalf. The referendum was held on 5 July 2015 and the documents were rejected by the Greek people by a large majority vote of 61.31%.

This was the first referendum held in Greece in the last 41 years, after Democracy was restored (1974) and the Constitution entered into force (1975). It was also the first time that the Greek people were given a direct “say” on the measures and memoranda implemented on them ever since May 2010.

During the last five years, measures have been legislated in violation of international law and constitutional provisions, through extraordinary procedures, of extreme emergency, by-passing the Parliament or circumventing parliamentary discussion and vote (e.g. 800-page laws construed in 1 single article to be discussed and voted upon in 10 hours), as I had the chance to explain during our meeting in Rome, last April.

These measures have resulted to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, unspeakable misery and grave violations of fundamental human rights, documented in several decisions issued by Greek courts as well as the European Committee on Social Rights, the Report Submitted by the United Nations Independent Expert on Public Debt and Human Rights, the conclusions reached by the European Parliament's Report on the Role and Operations of the Troika, and the Preliminary Report of the Truth Committee on Public Debt, established in the Context of the internal Regulation of the Hellenic Parliament. This Preliminary Report of the Hellenic Parliament Truth Committee on Public Debt is attached to this message, for your information, to underline the democratic necessity to review European policies on the Greek Debt, which the Committee has found to be illegitimate, illegal, odious and unsustainable. This means that the debt has been concluded through procedures which violate human rights, international law and the Greek Constitution. It also means that the debt is impossible to pay back without further serious violations of fundamental social and economic rights, which form an intrinsic part of our European civilization and common heritage.

The recent referendum was the first time that Parliament has been given a "say" before the conclusion of any agreement during the last five years and also the first time the people were given a "say" for specific measures to be inflicted on them. It was a true moment of democracy.

Unfortunately, this democratic process was not free of external interference, interventions and hindrances. Due to the ECB's decision not to grant adequate liquidity, people were called to vote with the banks closed, and subject to capital controls. What is more, European leaders and officials insisted on continuous public declarations, which grossly misrepresented the referendum question or asked for its annulment, in an attempt to preempt its outcome by arbitrary interpretations of the "yes" or "no" vote. As you know, the question of the referendum was never about staying or leaving the European Union or the Eurozone, but explicitly about accepting or rejecting the proposals tabled on 25 June 2015, with the form of an ultimatum. However, European officials made repeated public statements presenting this as a referendum in favor or against Europe or the euro, thereby undermining the very principles of the European Union.

Despite these interventions and the very conditions under which the vote was conducted (the banks being closed for a week), the Greek people overwhelmingly rejected the dead-end proposals for more austerity to repay an unsustainable debt. Interestingly, during the week preceding the referendum, the debt was revealed to be evaluated as unsustainable by the draft IMF report (titled "Preliminary Draft Debt Sustainability Analysis"), dated June 26, 2015, which was only published on July 2, 2015. This report directly contradicts and disproves the "preliminary debt-sustainability analysis for

Greece” dated a day earlier (June 25, 2015) submitted to the Greek Government and put on vote, thereby confirming that its rejection by the Government and the people was righteous.

The Greek people, through their vote, are giving democracy and transparency in Europe a chance to prevail.

As Parliamentarians and as Heads of Parliament, we are all called upon to carefully reflect on and to respect the referendum outcome, as well as to cooperate towards a humane and democratic solution, for a people that has long suffered. We are called upon to respect the right of the Greek people to live with dignity and hope, through solutions that can ensure that Europe remains a true home for its citizens, not a prison for its people.

It is my conviction that the Parliaments of the European Union and the European Parliament should be properly informed on the facts and adequately involved in the Union procedures, in order to guarantee that democracy in Europe does not cede its place to non-legitimized practices, which undermine the prosperity and the well-being of the European people and the European societies, thereby violating the primary statutory goals of the E.U. as set out in Common Article 3 of the Treaties. Parliaments and parliamentarians are elected by the people and account to the people. They are, by definition, the genuine voice of the people. And they should live up to people’s expectations to protect the fundamental European values and guarantees.

Looking at the situation once again from a Parliamentary and democratic perspective, it is intolerable to witness continuing attempts to contest or even deny the right of a people to decide through a democratic referendum for their fundamental rights to life, dignity, employment, social welfare, healthcare, education, pension, and the prospect of young and future generations. A prospect seriously jeopardized, through the so-called “bail-out” policies, which have led to 60% unemployment among the young, 72% unemployment among young women, and a 32.500 euro debt for every baby born in Greece.

I would therefore kindly ask you to refrain from statements such as those you have made in recent days, both before and after the referendum, which imply that the negative vote on antisocial measures provides ground for punitive action against the Greek people. I would equally kindly ask you to refrain from statements which contain arbitrary and false interpretations of the referendum outcome, thereby contesting a democratic procedure in an E.U. member-state.

I would also like to stress that the very fact that the ECB continues to deny adequate liquidity, thereby extending the bank closure, creates a solid impression that the people and the government are being punished for exercising a fundamental political right- the

right to vote. Furthermore, the fact that official statements, including your own, envisage the need for humanitarian aid to the Greek population if this situation persists, indicates that you are aware that the very survival of the Greek people is endangered by the ECB denial to grant liquidity. This admission underlines the urgent need for a democratic and humane solution instead of undemocratic and inhumane repercussions. It also reveals the level of responsibility European officials and leaders are called to assume.

The Greek tragedy is not a game and should not be dissociated from the consecutive mistakes, miscalculations and blatant errors made by Greece's creditors, which the latter have publicly recognized. To victimize a population in order to make up for such errors is an intolerable solution, which contradicts European principles.

I would therefore appeal to your sense of European solidarity and ask for your contribution in order to overcome this crisis, to ensure that respect for democracy, fundamental rights and equality in the European Union prevails, and to exercise the necessary democratic parliamentary control on European institutions to that effect.

Yours sincerely,

Zoe N. Konstantopoulou  
President of the Hellenic Parliament