

## 26 JUNE 2019 SPEECH ICPAC - FLORIN TOMA

- Your Excellency President of the Republic of Cyprus
- Mr. President of the House of Representatives
- Mr. President of ICPAC
- Esteemed guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues and friends

Thank you for the opportunity to address your 58th Annual General Meeting. I am honoured to be part of such an esteemed group of leaders and colleagues.

### **[ACCOUNTANCY EUROPE]**

Many of you may not know Accountancy Europe so well, so allow me to share with you more about us. We are the umbrella organisation for the European accountancy profession. Next to ICPAC, we represent 50 other institutes from 35 countries. But, as accountants, we work for people and people are central to Accountancy Europe's mission and strategy. Because people count - at the end of the day, this is the message that we want to express, whether it's to our members or to the EU Institutions.

This is also why I would like to thank Kyriakos Iordanou and his team for representing ICPAC at European level; it's always a pleasure to work with you. Whether it is in our Member Assemblies or our Expert Groups, ICPAC is an integral part of our decision making and we appreciate the perspectives that you bring to our work in Brussels.

### **[CYPRIOT PROFESSION]**

Ever since ICPAC joined Accountancy Europe, you have been such an active contributor and we greatly appreciate your continuous engagement on the European stage.

Especially as the accountancy profession in Cyprus is very prestigious. You are well respected for what you do, you are acknowledged to be central to how the economy works and participate in strategic debates. It is good to see that Cyprus values accountants for their strategic and important role affecting society as a whole

## **[GLOBAL FOCUS]**

Your profession is also a very globally focussed one, with Cyprus being at the forefront in adopting global standards.

Just last month, the EU celebrated the 15th anniversary of Cyprus joining the Union. This was part of a major enlargement that meant closer cooperation across cultures and geographies. In the recent EU elections, Cyprus has reaffirmed its commitment to the European Union. In this time of scepticism, it is very important that we stand united, whether as the accountancy profession or as Europeans. We believe that future is brighter when we work together.

## **[OUR PRIORITIES]**

Following the recent EU elections many new EU initiatives will affect the profession in all Member States. We are a single market which helps the profession operate more effectively. This also means that 80% of rules professional accountants deal with on a daily basis come from EU level. It is thus important that we are an integral part of informing the EU decision making process at an early stage; rather than amending what is already proposed, we should be part of agenda setting. Also, in order to remain relevant in influencing legislation, we need to be a innovative force. We cannot just bring our issues to the table but need to come with solutions to bigger public interest causes. Therefore, we have defined three priorities for the new EU mandate:

1. Sustainable finance: We are calling on businesses to redefine success to become sustainable, and the EU to leverage financial markets to transition to a sustainable economy. We are highlighting accountants as essential partners to build a sustainable financial system.
2. SMEs: We believe that SMEs will succeed by embracing technology and looking for new business opportunities. The EU must unleash the potential of SMEs. As accountants, we are SMEs and we are also their key advisors in helping the European economy grow.
3. Tax: We are urging policymakers to modernise taxation to respond to today's social, environmental, and digital challenges. The EU's tax systems must meet the demands of a resource constrained and online world. Accountants are crucial in this as they make tax systems work for taxpayers, tax administrations and society.

The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> strategic priorities for my Presidency relate to corporate reporting and audit and assurance.

4. Audit and assurance: We know we will have our hands full with the review of the 2014 audit reform in the coming EU mandate. This is another area where a united European profession is more important than ever. The future of audit & assurance and especially of SME audit are also high on our agenda.
5. Corporate reporting: Next to our regular contributions to shaping IFRS, we need to focus on the importance of non-financial reporting. Accountancy Europe has led the Europe wide debate on shaping the future of corporate reporting since 2015.

## **FUTURE ORIENTATION**

The world is changing around us. Whether we like it or not technology will fundamentally change how the profession works. We cannot stop this. What we can do, is adapt. New technologies will automate much of the day-to-day work that accountants do.

Just as when spreadsheet software became available, many thought the accountancy profession would become obsolete. Not so. Because it was the expertise, judgment and knowledge that accountants brought to the task that made them valuable.

It is the same today. We need to become strategic partners to our clients on financial matters, helping clients to make the right decisions for a sustainable growth of their business.

Many of the most advanced firms are not only embracing technology, but also expanding into new areas as well. IT audits, sustainability health checks and more. These require new skills and we will see the face of the profession changing as well.

## **[STRONGER TOGETHER]**

I invite you to join me and Accountancy Europe in looking forward at the challenges and the opportunities which lie ahead – let's make the best of it by working together. We strive to meet the needs of our members and also encourage them to grow. This is only possible through collaborating closely, as we do with ICPAC. I look forward to celebrating many future successes with you. Thank you very much.