

Brussels, 12 march 2010

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my great pleasure and honour to present Professor Diamandouros with the Officer Order of Merit.

His achievements as the present European Ombudsman in protection of human rights are great and most certainly deserve appreciation.

Professor Diamandouros is an exceptional man, who knows the secret of compiling amazing academic qualities with practical experience which he gained, among others, as the first ombudsman of Greeks, and since 2003 as the ombudsman of all Europeans.

The intellectual roots of his work are certainly worthy of a Greek, a direct descendant of one of the greatest intellectual traditions to shape the European identity.

However, his work is also modern and characterized by a thorough knowledge of both the European and the American thought.

European citizens should be very happy to have such an ombudsman!

We in Poland also have our particular reasons to be grateful to Prof. Diamandouros for dealing with the problem concerning competitions organized by the European Personnel Selection Office.

In one of the open competitions to select administrators of Polish nationality, Polish candidates felt they were not equally treated, as compared to candidates from other countries. Professor Diamandouros produced a comprehensive report on that matter published last year. Both the report and the seriousness of Prof. Diamadouros' approach to the issue show his great qualities of a true and committed defender of the rights of European citizens, and therefore of the citizens of Polish nationality.

Since our accession to the European Union you have always been fair, dedicated and understanding towards the problems of Polish people.

Thanks to your commitment to investigate complaints concerning maladministration in the institutions and bodies of the European Union those institutions are more effective and sensitive to human rights of all persons living in our integrating continent. This, along with national ombudspersons who scrutinize national institutions, creates a comprehensive system of protection.

I am more than certain to receive your support, Professor Diamandouros, for the Eastern Partnership of the EU which is a field where we try to be very active with our fellow ombudspersons from Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Belorussia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. I need to express my hope that our model cooperation continues for the improvement of human rights protection.

Profesor Diamandouros, please accept my most sincere congratulations on your work and best wishes for your personal life.

May I also take this opportunity to thank Polish Ambassador for organizing this ceremony and to thank all of you for your company during this pleasant event.