

Report of the Cyprus and Hellenic Affairs Committee

95th Annual AHEPA Supreme Convention

Orlando, Florida

July 26, 2017

The following report was presented to the General Session of the 95th Annual Supreme Convention on July 27, 2017:

- 1) The Order of AHEPA will continue to work to strengthen the AHEPA Grass Roots Network, which uniquely distinguishes the AHEPA from all other Greek American organizations, and which if adequately developed, can serve as its most effective tool for the promotion of Greek American interests and ideals. At the least, AHEPA must secure one grassroots representative from each chapter.
- 2) AHEPA will continue its efforts to grow the Hellenic Caucus in the House of Representatives, which now stands at 126. Our goal for the 115th Congress continues to be 150 members, which ends December 2018.
- 3) AHEPA is concerned about the growth of the Congressional Turkish Caucus, which exceeds the Hellenic Caucus in membership.
- 4) AHEPA will continue to support H.Res.220, a bipartisan anti-genocide resolution calling on the United States to apply the lessons of the Armenian Genocide in seeking to prevent modern day atrocities across the Middle East and which also contains a resolved clause that states for the U.S. to also draw on "...the broader genocidal campaign by the Ottoman Empire against Armenians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syrians, Greeks, Pontians and other Christians upon their biblical era homelands."
- 5) AHEPA will continue to support H.Con.51, expressing the sense of Congress for the Parthenon Marbles to be returned to Greece.
- 6) AHEPA will continue to work with Congress and the relevant Executive Branch agencies to ensure Greece's standing in the Visa Waiver Program is viewed favorably.
- 7) AHEPA will work with Congress and the relevant Executive Branch agencies to enhance and strengthen United States-Greece's military-to-military cooperation, especially with regard to NSA Souda Bay, Crete.
- 8) AHEPA applauds efforts of the bipartisan calls of Congress, especially the Hellenic Caucus, to condemn--and seek justice--following the May 16 brutal attack upon peaceful American protesters on American soil by the Turkish president's security detail. AHEPA will continue to work to put a halt to the proposed small-arms sale to the very same Turkish security detail that committed this attack.
- 9) AHEPA seeks an update on the effort to lift the U.S arms embargo on Cyprus, and specifically, if a report has been issued on Cyprus' military capabilities as instructed by the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act.
- 10) AHEPA reasserts its previous statements issued in 2013 and 2016 that Turkey must meet its commitment to the World Heritage Convention as it pertains to Hagia Sophia as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- 11) AHEPA will seek to strengthen relations with other appropriate Greek American organizations in order to more effectively fulfill its mission, as it relates to Greece, Cyprus, the Ecumenical Patriarchate and to issues involving the FYROM, the Greek minority in Albania, and the Aegean Sea.
- 12) AHEPA will continue to work to strengthen relations with American Jewish organizations and collaborate on issues of mutual interest in the spirit of the second successful historic Leadership Mission that took place in January 2016. The Committee endorses the notion of continued Leadership Missions and engagement with American Jewish organizations.
- 13) AHEPA will continue to speak out against extremism on both sides of the political spectrum and condemns all forms of intolerance, hate speech, bigotry, and discrimination fostered by extremist elements.

In addition, the Committee:

- Calls for continued high-level engagement by the United States on Greece’s economic and migratory crises, the Cyprus issue, and U.S.-Cyprus bilateral relations.
- Reaffirms AHEPA’s [statement](https://www.ahepanews.org/single-post/2017/07/07/AHEPA-Statement-on-Closure-of-Conference-of-Cyprus-without-Agreement) on the close of the Conference on Cyprus that ended disappointingly without having reached an agreement due to Turkish intransigence (see <https://www.ahepanews.org/single-post/2017/07/07/AHEPA-Statement-on-Closure-of-Conference-of-Cyprus-without-Agreement>).
- Is deeply concerned and opposed to Turkey’s egregious violations of Greece’s sovereignty via overflights of Greece’s airspace and encroachment in Greece’s territorial waters, all of which inflame tensions and can lead to unintended consequences.
- Is deeply concerned about the direction of Turkey’s democratic institutions, including recent examples of human rights and academic suppression; and this concern raises the question as to whether Turkey is becoming more of liability than an asset to the United States.

Furthermore, the Committee recommended AHEPA examine the following:

- That Supreme Lodge and District Lodge officers, upon their visitations, include in their remarks or addresses at meetings and other events, the need to seek individuals to serve on the Cyprus & Hellenic Affairs Committee and for individuals to join AHEPA’s Congressional Grass Roots Network.
- AHEPA will provide annual financial funding in the amount of \$20,000 for the Cyprus and Hellenic Affairs Committee, in order to strengthen its communications capabilities, to permit holding educational symposiums, and to permit printing of educational materials.
- AHEPA National will grant consideration to encouraging chapters to submit a voluntary \$100 contribution to the AHEPA Cyprus & Hellenic Affairs Committee.
- AHEPA to communicate the work of the Committee or initiatives the Committee undertakes through its avenues of mass distribution.
- Ways to foster increased participation in Capitol Hill Day.

Finally, the Committee welcomed the participation of AHEPA Australasia Supreme President Peter Yiannoudes, who shared his perspective on the Greek Australian community’s work on public policy issues.

This report was compiled with the assistance of Andrew Kaffes.

Respectfully submitted,

Convention Committee & Guests

Chris Diamantoukos, Supreme Governor
Vassos Chrysanthou, Board of Trustees
Peter Yiannoudes, AHEPA Australasia National President
George Papageorge, Past Supreme Governor
Tom Gober, Past Supreme Treasurer
Nick Kavadas, Past Supreme Governor
Gus Constantine
Marios Stephanides