

## **Highlights of Deputy FM Kourkoulas intervention, in his capacity as representative of the Presidency of the Council of the EU, at the European Parliament Plenary (Strasbourg, 12 March 2014)**

Deputy Foreign Minister Dimitris Kourkoulas stated the following in his intervention, as representative of the Presidency of the Council of the EU, during yesterday's debate at the European Parliamentary Plenary on the situation in Ukraine:

- “The situation in Ukraine is one of the most serious crises Europe has seen in recent years. It is obvious that the events happening in our neighbourhood are major, with specific repercussions for all the European states.”
- “Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Evangelos Venizelos visited Kiev and Mariupol on 2 March 2014, to evaluate the situation and convey the EU's message to the local authorities. Subsequently, he briefed the Foreign Affairs Council at the extraordinary meeting of 3 March 2014, which was held in preparation for the Summit Meeting that followed on the Ukraine crisis.”
- “The solution to the crisis must be founded on respect for the territorial integrity, the sovereign rights and the independence of Ukraine, in accordance with international law. More specifically, the European leaders agreed that the decision of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea on the holding of a referendum on the future status of the region is not in line with the Ukrainian Constitution and, consequently, is illegal.”
- “It is vital that the two sides – the Ukrainian and Russian sides – meet and talk to each other, without delay and, potentially, within the framework of multilateral mechanisms. Additionally, the European leaders decided that the EU must participate in the multilateral meetings and coordinating groups that are formulated to de-escalate the crisis. The specific actions must be aimed at, among other things, building trust between the two sides, ensuring the territorial integrity of Ukraine, protecting all citizens from intimidation, ensuring respect for the rights of all the minorities, including linguistic minorities, providing assistance for holding free and fair elections, and monitoring the implementation of agreements.”