

**“Bridging divisions in cities” award to Berlin  
in the framework of the Opening Ceremony of  
the 49<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Union of the Capitals of the European Union**

**Short message by UCEU President 2009  
Mayor of Nicosia, Ms Eleni Mavrou**

**Nicosia, Famagusta Gate Municipal Cultural Centre, 29<sup>th</sup> October 2009**

Honourable Guests

This year’s annual meeting of the Union of the Capitals of the European Union in Nicosia coincides with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall. The family of European capitals that our Union represents has unanimously supported the proposal to mark the opening of our 49th Conference of the Union with a symbolic award to the city of Berlin on “Bridging Divisions in Cities”.

The city of Berlin is a prime example of how the history of a capital city reflects the history of nations and the ways in which this history is linked to international history, politics and conflicts. It demonstrates how events of critical national and international significance largely impact, often in tragic ways, upon the territory and the citizens of a capital city.

Berlin has borne the devastating spatial, social, economic and cultural effects of the city’s division. It has become a city-symbol for its pioneering efforts in addressing the impacts of a long standing division, including not only the spatial and physical but also the mental barriers which division creates.

The award on ‘Bridging divisions in cities’ which we are about to present to the Representative of Berlin is intended to underline a message: that cities and their citizens should not and cannot remain divided. It also aims to highlight the role that city authorities can play in bridging the diverse dimensions and impacts of divisions, which challenge the sustainability, competitiveness and inclusiveness of cities. It underlines our responsibility to challenge the legacy of division towards creating a new legacy of solidarity and shared aspirations for a future with social and economic benefits for all.

We are gathered tonight in the capital of Cyprus which reflects in many ways the turbulent history of the island and its current unacceptable division. Fully acknowledging the fact that divisions within cities are extremely varied in terms of their political context, history and nature, we are hopeful that we too will soon be able to talk of a reunited Nicosia and a joint peaceful future for its citizens.

It is my great pleasure to welcome the Representative of the Berlin Senate for Integration and Migration, Mr Günter Piening, and to invite him to receive on behalf of the city of Berlin the “Bridging Divisions in Cities” award.

Dear Mr. Piening, this award expresses the feelings of friendship and solidarity of Nicosia and the other European capitals. Please convey to the city of Berlin and its citizens our warmest wishes for continuing peace, prosperity and well being that accompany this award.