**Mr. Michalis Antoniou Intervention to the EU’s Brexit Chief Negotiator**

**Mr. Michel Barnier**

**European Economic and Social Committee Plenary Session,**

**Brussels 6 July 2017**

Dear M. Barnier,

I am a Greek Cypriot, DG of the Cyprus Employers Federation, a sister organisation of French Medef and all other European Federations - members of Businesseurope.

Although you will be negotiating on behalf of the EU as a whole, we ask that you keep in mind that some member-states are more exposed to the British economy than others, and that the impact of Brexit will not be uniform throughout the EU.

One such a case is Cyprus, a former British colony.

The UK is Cyprus’ biggest export destination and represents almost half of Cyprus’ tourism, while an estimated 70,000 Britons reside permanently in Cyprus, amounting at almost 10% of the island’s total population.

I understand that you are not negotiating the post Brexit relationship between the EU and the UK, but I mention the above so as to give you an indication of our grave concern and the importance we place on a balanced and fair approach towards our British brothers and sisters.

I believe that:

On the one hand we need to act in such a way so as to discourage other member states from considering exit from the EU,

While on the other hand, we must treat the British people with dignity and respect so as to retain and further enhance pro Union forces in the UK, investing on the possibility that a new referendum is held, where the vast majority of the Brits will vote in favour of their EU destiny.

Thank you.