

**8th Annual AHI Hellenic Heritage Achievement
and
National Public Service Award Gala Dinner
Grande Bretagne
Wednesday, May 30, 2012**

Thank you for that kind introduction.

Ministers, members of the American-Hellenic Institute, distinguished guests,
good evening and thank you for inviting me here tonight.

It is an honor and a privilege to share this evening's 8th Annual Hellenic Heritage Achievement & National Public Service Awards Dinner with you. I appreciate the exceptional work that the American Hellenic Institute does to preserve and enhance the ties of friendship and cooperation that exist between the United States and Greece.

AHI members care deeply about the United States' relationship with Greece and our shared devotion to the ideals of freedom and democracy. Whether through political engagement, business activity or awards dinners like this to honor the important work and high achievements of Ms. Frangou and Mr. Economou, your work sustains us through our challenges and our triumphs and strengthens the rich and textured relations between the United States and Greece.

I am pleased to be able to report to you tonight that Greek-American relations are as strong as they have ever been. To be sure, this is not an easy

moment in Greece's history, and the country faces significant challenges. I am optimistic, however, that the path of reform that the Greek people have begun will ensure a more prosperous future.

The United States has made clear its strong support for Greece's reform efforts, and is actively engaged with European leaders to address the broader economic crisis in the euro zone. We realize that in today's interconnected world, disruptions on one side of the Atlantic can have great impact on the other. President Obama has repeatedly acknowledged this, and did so again recently in Chicago, telling press that what happens in Greece with respect to its current fiscal crisis will have an impact on the United States.

At the same time, I think it is important to note that our cooperation and partnership continues across the whole gamut of international and global issues that concern our two countries. This was recently reaffirmed at NATO's Summit in Chicago, where Greece joined the United States and twenty-six other allies in assuring the world of our commitment to finish our mission in Afghanistan, and to support a new post-2014 mission there to train, advise and assist Afghan forces to maintain their own security. Greece also demonstrated both its commitment to NATO and its geo-strategic importance in its support of NATO operations from its territory that enforced UN Security Council Resolutions against the Libyan dictator Qadhafi.

The United States and Greece share common objectives in the desire to integrate the Balkans into Trans-Atlantic and European institutions, and we share common interests elsewhere, including in combating terrorism and promoting peace in the Middle East. The lesson I draw from this is that the longstanding friendship between our two countries goes beyond any specific, narrowly defined interests. We have stood by each other's side through terrible wars and politically difficult times. Notwithstanding the economic challenges we all face, we will continue to cooperate to achieve our common goals both in this region and around the world. As we continue that effort, we will look to you and other pillars of the Greek-American community for support.

For decades, you have constituted the ballast which has kept the bilateral relationship on a steady course, and we look forward to continuing to work with you in the future.