

Distinguished guests, dear friends,

On behalf of all of us at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation i would like to thank you for joining us for this 4th annual conference that we are hosting. When we held our 1st conference back in 2012, with the socioeconomic crisis in Greece well under way, we thought at the time that it was going to be a ‘one-off’. We then realized that a platform, a network had been created for much needed discussion with no hidden agendas and a lot of very interesting and productive ideas being exchanged. And we continued. In 2013 we all got together to discuss the role of philanthropy within a social welfare society, and last year, in 2014, the need to recharge the youth, the need of ethics within philanthropy, and the socioeconomic importance of arts and culture. So we continued. On the positive side there is a lot of interest and many great ideas about how we can all contribute towards a better society for all, and the need to get together, from different places, geographically/ideologically/philosophically/practically, is indeed invaluable. On the negative side, the socioeconomic crisis continues, not only in Greece which seems to be in the front line, but the underlying socioeconomic issues are evident in many places around the globe, and the need to face them and do something about them continues unabated. The inequalities in income, in education, in technological and medical advances, race, basic needs and freedoms, lack of hope and dreams, are with us, all around us, and unless all the healthy forces get together to face them, trouble lies ahead for many of us. And we continue.

During my opening remarks last year I made reference to Franklin Delano Roosevelt who in his State of the Union Address on January 6, 1941, stressed the importance of the Four Freedoms in helping ensure a better life for all the people around the world. His Four Freedoms included the freedom of speech and expression, the freedom of Religion and worship, the freedom from want, and the freedom from fear. Four essential freedoms that today, although many times taken for granted by many, are still essential and imperative to fight for, if we want, indeed, to ensure a better life all around the world for all of us and for our children. As a 21st century global society we still need to be reminded of the importance of such freedoms. Freedoms enjoyed by many, yet again, freedoms that have to be secured for many more.

In the last decade it has been made clear that the social welfare state is not viable. It is rather the notion of the social welfare society that should be the goal, I would argue that it is not a matter of choice but rather a matter of necessity, necessity for a more just and efficient society if not for survival itself. The problems are simply too many, too complicated, too big for the state to solve on its own, certainly as such for the Private sector to do so on its own, and obviously too big for philanthropy to deal with on its own either. We, as people, need proper collaborations between all of society’s healthy forces, in order to keep pace with the new challenges facing our world today.

This year’s conference deals with the issue of sustainability at large. The conference’s focus originally was on sustainability in relation to the natural environment, as a strategy to address increasing concerns about continuous environmental degradation. The more we looked into it, however, the more evident it became that the use of the words *sustainability* and *sustainable* has become pervasive, in ways that extend far beyond environmental issues only. Today we talk about *sustainable cities and communities, sustainable food, development, sustainable growth, health care systems, sustainable education, architecture, and ultimately a sustainable society, and a sustainable future.*

To have a meaningful discussion about sustainability one has to move beyond just the natural environment and expand to include social- and economic-related domains as well. This was one of our principal goals about this year’s conference, and we aim to address it by focusing on issues such as *sustainable philanthropy and sustainable philanthropic practices, sustainable health and food systems, sustainable communities* and the role of the arts in attaining them, *sustainable social welfare systems, and sustainable environmental practices.* By doing so we hope that we can all learn something and be better equipped in dealing with today’s complex problems and be able to contribute in helping towards creating a fairer and healthier society, strong enough to defend itself against extremes of all kinds. A sustainable society not only to survive but one that can again breed more hope and dreams for a better tomorrow for all human beings all around the world. Sustainability itself will remain a dynamic and ever evolving process, inherently complicated, but also inherently important as we all see and feel the need for the Public and Private sectors to work together, in a sustainable way, and with the help of philanthropy at large create the infrastructure necessary to deal with life itself. And let us not forget the importance for productive and ethical leadership required to make these collaborations truly work; and unfortunately in today’s world true leaders, similar to common sense, are not common.

We at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, realizing our limitations but at the same time recognizing our responsibilities, will continue to contribute to our maximum possible abilities. We are an international Foundation with our international grant making activities touching more than 110 countries, but Greece, our founder's birthplace and a country deep in crisis, will continue to be a main focus of ours. This time next year we plan to deliver to the Greek State the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center which will be the new home of the Greek National Library and the Greek National Opera together with the new Stavros Niarchos park, a 40+ acre green park. At the same time, and on top of our usual grant making activities we have tried to respond to the crisis in the last few years with two additional initiatives, a 100m Euro initiative (started in 2012 and completed at the beginning of this year) to help alleviate the effects of the socioeconomic crisis that has hurt so many people in Greece, and a newer also 100m Euro initiative to help recharge the Youth (which still on-going). You can visit our website (www.snf.org/el/grafeio-typou/lista-neon/2015/02/oloklirosi-tis-protoboulias-enantia-stin-krisi/) where you can watch the documentary film that we did earlier this year about what was achieved, collectively, with this, first, 100m Euro initiative.

Today, and as the crisis continues unabated, we announce that in that same spirit and effective immediately we will add another 100m Euro to our first initiative to continue to contribute towards alleviating the effects of this on-going socioeconomic crisis which has decimated in so many ways large parts of the Greek population.

Our overall grants in Greece have now summed up to almost 1 billion Euros and we hope that our actions can contribute so that the negative effects of the current crisis do not become themselves sustainable. Furthermore we hope that our actions will not only alleviate the effects of the current crisis but that they will also serve as an example for at least the young generations that success also creates a duty, a responsibility, to help others; otherwise success itself, and in many ways capitalism as we know it, cannot be sustainable in the long run. It is also a privilege and an honor to be able to do so. All of us at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation owe this amazing opportunity we have to help others to my great uncle, the late Stavros Niarchos.

And as Greece is experiencing the very tough current challenges let us remember the famous Greek poet and writer, the late Yannis Ritsos, who in his poem *Don't mourn for romiosini* (another word for Greeks at large) written in 1968, said:

“Τη ρωμιοσύνη μην την κλαις
εκεί που πάει να σκύψει
με το σουγιά στο κόκκαλο
με το λουρί στο σβέρκο

Νάτη πετιέται απο ξαρχής
κι αντριεύει και θεριεύει
και καμακώνει το θεριό
με το καμάκι του ήλιου “

“Do not mourn for romiosyne
as she is about to kneel down
forced by a knife to the bone
by a strap to the neck

Here she rises again
she grows stronger and furious
and harpoons the beast
with the harpoon of the sun.”

So again, thank you all for joining us and we hope that you will find the presentations and discussions productive and fulfilling.