

Your Eminence, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here this evening and thank you all for joining us. On behalf of all of us at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, I would like to thank the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations and specifically I would like to thank the NY Times Opinion Section, Op-Docs, represented by its Executive Producer Kathleen Lingo. It is greatly because of the NY Times Op-Docs that we are all gathered here today.

Less than 3 weeks ago my colleague Vasili Tsamis brought to my attention the nomination of 4.1 miles, directed by a fellow Greek, the young Daphne Mantziaraki. We watched the documentary and we were touched to our core, as we ourselves, have been very actively involved through our Foundation's grant making activities with trying to offer support towards our homeland's ability to deal with the issue of refugees at large, inside and outside of Greece. Jimmy Demetro, the Director of the NYC Greek Film Festival had already been instrumental in bringing Daphne in touch with us.

So a truly collective effort to share an exceptional documentary. Even though it did not win the Oscar last Sunday it won our great appreciation in sharing with us all a sample, but how powerful indeed, of what has been taking place in the last couple of years in the Greek seas. Moreover, even though the current situation has improved somewhat due to the political deals been made, it could all unravel at any point and unfortunately such and even worse scenes would be taking place once again, especially as no real solution is seen for Syria's on-going war.

We were very happy to arrange for Captain Kyriakos Papadopoulos to come from Greece to attend the Oscars and be here with us this evening. He is the soul of the documentary, and in a bigger picture, represents in the best possible way the notion of philotimo, the notion of just doing the right thing, no matter what. He is a walking example of what it means to be truly humanitarian, with actions not just words; and all this happening while his country is going itself through one of its worst socioeconomic crises in its modern history.

Thank you Kyriako, and thank you Daphne for bringing to the surface and sharing with us in such a vivid way an issue which we all seem to tend to acknowledge but at the same time not being as involved, as a society, to make sure that scenes like that don't take place in our own back yards.

Finally, what Kyriakos and others have done, themselves being deeply affected, cannot be the long-term solution. What this documentary 4.1 miles captures vividly is the heavy psychological toll that the crisis has imparted not only on the refugees themselves but also on volunteers, emergency respondents, health professionals etc., as well as the local population. These are of course different degrees of trauma, but one cannot underestimate the impact of such traumatic experiences. Political leaders all around, and in this case all around Europe, should step up and deliver a sustainable and humane solution. We all want secure and safe borders, but really smart borders can indeed find ways to be humane at the same time.

Thank you.