

Athens, 24 January 2009

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER KOSTAS KARAMANLIS AT THE EVENT FOR
THE PRESENTATION OF THE PLAN FOR THE "STAVROS NIARCHOS
FOUNDATION "CULTURAL CENTRE" (ZAPPEION)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is truly a day that fills us with anticipation. A day of pride in a great, magnificent project. And this event is an important step on the way to materializing one of the most ambitious Cultural projects of our time. Thanks to the generous donation of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Greece will obtain one of the most modern cultural parks in the world. Pioneering, multidimensional, essentially unique. A 120,000 square meter Park, home to the new building of the National Library of Greece and the new building of the Greek National Opera. An urban oasis is being created with operational capacity for a wide variety of events and activities. A small planet of knowledge, research and technology, theatre arts and literature, music and entertainment, as well as outdoor recreation. A point of reference for the leisure time of the young and old. Fully accessible to persons with special needs. Open to every citizen; Also making full use of internet technology, so that some events can be shared with other cities and regions of Greece.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

From the very first moment the Stavros Niarchos Foundation expressed interest in such a vital, exceptional and complex project and as soon as I was informed that such a generous offer was being made, my thoughts turned to the great national benefactors. It was with great pleasure that I embraced and closely followed the process that led to this day. Procedural issues were resolved quick in through intensive communication with the competent ministers. My support was, is and will be ongoing and direct.

I want to note that the National Library that is being created –outfitted with state-of-the-art technology– marks a transition into the new era. Greeks and non-Greeks alike will have the opportunity of easy access to its riches –even remotely, via the internet.

It is, in the last analysis, a project whose absence was felt; a project we had very great need of.

I also want to say a few words about the environmental dimension of this project, which is made crystal clear by the design plans being presented today. The zero-emissions and energy-autonomy philosophy governing the Cultural Centre is as revolutionary as it is crucial. Not only will the Centre not pollute, but it will also function –through the Park– as a lung, improving air quality and quality of life. It will serve as a point of reference both in Greece and abroad. It will be a yardstick against which new facilities will be measured. And just think: All this in the heart of Attiki!

For this impressive project –this asset for all Greeks– I would like to warmly thank and congratulate the heads of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Messrs. Philipos Niarchos, Spyros Niarchos and Andreas Dracopoulos. Their patronage is a vital link in the chain of national benefaction. I would also like to thank the Executive Director of the Greek Advisory Board, Mr. Epaminondas Farmakis, as well as its members. The care that they have taken from the moment this idea was conceived up until today has been truly praiseworthy. And of course I would also like to congratulate the acclaimed architect Mr. Renzo Piano and his associates. The design is truly astonishing. In a wonderful manner, it combines high aesthetics with functionality, as well as and consideration for the environment.

This Centre, ladies and gentlemen, is a milestone for our country. I am certain that its impact will extend beyond our national boundaries. The Stavros Niarchos Foundation provides, once again, with a tangible example of its vast social contribution, making it clear that the great historical legacy of Greek benefactors –to whom the nation owes so much– resonates with undiminished strength in the 21st century.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With the completion of the Centre – the new buildings of the National Library, the National Opera, and the Environmental Park – our country will obtain a living Cultural monument. A landmark of a new aesthetic for Attiki. I am certain that Greek women and men, as well as foreign visitors to the Centre, will embrace it, enjoy it, love it. I am certain that, thanks to this great gift from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, and thanks to the creative talent of Mr. Piano and his associates, Culture will gain a unique point of reference. The families that will enjoy the Park will come closer to

knowledge and our culture. Visitors to the Library and the Opera House will also take pleasure in a green oasis.

Once again, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the great patrons. I offer you my heartfelt thanks. You are the proof that Greek benefaction continues to exist in the 21st century. Be certain that not only those who use the Park, the Library and the Opera House, but also every Greek, will be grateful to you for this exceptional offer.

Thank you.