

Your Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America, National Commander Dr. Anthony Limberakis, Honorable Congressman Gus Bilirakis and Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, Your Excellency the Ambassador of Greece Christos Panagopoulos, Honorable Consul General of Greece to New York, Georgios Iliopoulos, Honorable Consul General of Cyprus to New York, Koula Sofianou, Your Eminences and Honorable Dignitaries, ladies and gentlemen,

Kalispera!

On behalf of all of us at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, I am truly honored to accept the prestigious *Athenagoras Human Rights Award*. The Foundation wishes to thank sincerely the Order of Saint Andrew and the Archons for this prestigious honor.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 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 at 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. In 1948, a United Nations Committee led by Eleanor Roosevelt drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which included and broadened the ideas of FDR's Four Freedoms. This week, the FDR Four Freedoms Park was inaugurated at the southern tip of New York's Roosevelt Island, not far from where we are gathered this evening. As a 21<sup>st</sup> century global society we still need to be reminded of the importance of such freedoms. Freedoms enjoyed by many, yet again, freedoms needing to be secured for many more.

Anders Aslund, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute of International Economics in Washington, DC, in an article published recently mentions the need of a Social Welfare Society instead of a Social Welfare State. There is no doubt that in today's complicated and often too polarizing world we need all the help we can get. But in the last decades, even before the challenges became so inter-related and increasingly too complex to solve, both the State and the Private sector everywhere have been unable, for various

reasons, to provide on their own the necessary and appropriate environment for our societies not only to survive, but also to thrive and excel.

John F. Kennedy, almost half a century ago, inspired us all with his memorable “ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country”. In many instances, the problem today is that we don’t even ask the question, but instead all of us are eager to criticize, patronize, and find excuses why things simply “do not work”.

The need for a Social Welfare Society is there, and it is a need for a fair, dynamic and viable society, where all members, from all sectors, including public, private, not-for-profits, supranational organizations and humanitarian institutions, have to contribute towards creating a healthy society, able to defend itself against today’s many and complex challenges; a society also able to provide for its citizens the basic needs of life; to allow for decency, dignity, and civility; and, last but not least, to provide an opportunity to dream, to help make dreams become reality, and to hope for a better tomorrow. All positive forces have to collaborate towards this end.

One of the most constructive ways to be of help is through Philanthropy, which can be expressed in many ways, with financial support being an effective way, but not the only one. Volunteerism is another way. At this point, I would like to mention one individual who is with us this evening, Mrs. Elli Antoniadis, who, for decades, and in so many different ways, has always volunteered her time and efforts to help the needy and to promote Hellenism at large. She reminds me of Aristotle’s saying, seen also on the cover of a pamphlet at the Greek Cathedral School, “Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all”. Elli has a very large and educated heart, indeed. Thank you Elli.

Philanthropy is one of the few areas nowadays that should not, and does not thankfully, polarize people. Foundations, the institutionalized form of philanthropy, get the moral satisfaction that comes from having played, hopefully, a productive role in complementing the State’s efforts in providing a better society for all. Philanthropy, however, cannot and should never, anyway, replace the State. Furthermore, it does not just happen by itself, and it is not a 'divine' force of good. It needs time and financial

resources, it needs a certain commitment, and in a larger scale it is not unlike running any other successful for-profit enterprise. Instead of looking at the Profit+Loss statement at the end of the year, Foundations focus in providing for a better society for all. The multiplier effect of collaborations can be dramatic, both practically speaking and, indeed, psychologically too.

We, at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, are going through our teenager years, being 16 years young (we were 'born' in 1996), and we are kind of hyperactive with a lot of projects going on. We are continuing with our global grant-making activities, with our non-Greek grants constituting about 50% of our overall grant making, if we exclude the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center. At the beginning of this year we initiated our Special Greek Social Program, which is our latest initiative to help alleviate the negative socioeconomic pressures that Greek people are facing today. We have provided 100m Euro, of which over 48m Euros have already been committed to many organizations. Last but not least comes the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center. We are on budget and on time for it to be delivered to the Greek society at the end of 2015. This is our largest single grant, a project that can inspire everyone's dreams for a new Greece.

We are not here to brag about our grant-making, we know how lucky we are that our Founder created the wealth and gave us this opportunity to be able to contribute to society in a meaningful way. We welcome any kind of collaborations, ideas, anything that at the end of the day can multiply and amplify everyone's contributions to society. There is nothing to be antagonistic about; there is no 'crowding out' effect in the area of philanthropy. Everything is about the aggregate support Foundations and acts of Philanthropy as a whole, including, among other things, volunteerism, can generate in order to improve everyone's efforts to alleviate social pain and to improve in any possible way everyone's quality of life.

Finding prospective grantees is not difficult, especially during such crises. Yes, to implement a grant efficiently can be sometimes rather 'demanding', but when there is a will there is a way. Our starting point is really easy: does the proposed grant add value to society? In this specific environment, does it alleviate pain, does it provide relief and

does it restore dignity? Are the people involved ethical, professional, committed and able to implement the project's mission?

Greece needs YOU, needs us, it needs all of us. This is not the time to criticize or patronize, but rather to help in any way possible. We can all learn from one another, and at times adapt to the new realities. We need to sustain the basic pillars of society and democracy at large, to ensure that we will have a basic structure based on which we can eventually restructure. We cannot let everyone get degraded and then expect everything to automatically improve. In time of crises like the one Greece is experiencing right now, with basic needs so clearly lacking, philanthropy's role is challenging, yet quite clear. Philanthropy's role is truly fulfilling by making it possible to alleviate critical and vital socioeconomic pressures.

I would like to thank our Founder, the late Stavros Niarchos, for giving us this opportunity by means of our Foundation to be able to play a constructive role in trying to solve today's problems and contribute to a better tomorrow. Equally, I am honored and privileged to work with my great colleagues at our Foundation's offices at both sides of the Atlantic, some of whom are with us this evening. Working with them towards achieving our mission makes it a very fulfilling experience indeed.

A modern Greek philosopher, Emmanouil Kriaras, born in 1906 and still active today at 106, once said that true love can only be achieved by being able to constantly seek your ideals. In closing, I urge all of you to do seek your ideals, to do your best to help the needy, and in doing so, to stay in love.

Thank you!