

"The shipping industry as a leading global power "

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It's a great pleasure to be here today to discuss the global role of Greek Shipping. A sector that endures harsh times, flourishes in prosperous ones and supports Greece during both the bad and the good times. After all, Greek Shipping is the highest achievement of modern Greece!

Nowadays, the image of the Greek economy is slowly but surely improving. The primary surplus that we have achieved, as a result of the sacrifices that Greek citizens have endured, forms a new basis for the national economy to attract new investment and further develop. Having said that, shipping was traditionally a fundamental basis on which our country could thrive and attract new investments.

The volume of Greek Shipping:

The Greek fleet encompasses 1,551 ships. The Greek-owned fleet retained its leading position in terms of tonnage. Greek shipping currently accumulates 3,428 vessels (i.e. vessels greater than 1,000 GT) representing 15.56% of the total world dwt. The Greek flag fleet occupies the sixth position internationally and the second one within Europe. The Greek-owned fleet represents 42.72 % globally. Moreover, Greek owners control 23.55% of the global tanker fleet (crude oil tankers), 17.20% of the global bulk carrier fleet and 12.51% of the global chemical and product carriers fleet in terms of DWT (excluding vessels currently on order).

Greek Shipping comes first internationally and this leading position is not merely a fact of the present and a pure coincidence. It is timeless. It has prevailed through time. And as such is indisputable. And this constitutes a unique power of reinforcement for the balance of payments of the Greek economy, which has always been the long-standing "Achilles heel" of our finance policy.

The comparative advantages of Shipping

But from where this unique comparative advantage of Greece arouses?

* So firstly, seamanship is almost identical with being Greek formulating a persisting competitive advantage. In mythology, Greece is borne with Argo and the Homeric epics. In other words, Greece is borne as an epos and as a tragedy and as an eternal homesick wound and as a perpetual struggle for virtue and prosperity, against the sea- waves.

Sometime around the end of the 5th century BC, Greek language developed, the sublime "great state of the sea", as Thucydides stated. Throughout the modern era, Greece has revived once more through the naval force of the "ship masters", who orchestrated Paligenesia.

The Greek man has many virtues. One of the most intact and eternal is his seamanship.

* Secondly, open perspectives characterize the nature of shipping. In a globalized society without any limitations, development cannot be

achieved without boundless and never-ending horizons. Greece could only become a leading power, if it overcomes itself-imposed restrictions, perceiving itself as "the navel of the earth". It shall be apprehended that the only way forward is extraversion. And the main way to achieve this is through Shipping.

* Thirdly, the Shipping industry operates in a global, almost complete, competitive market. Competitive in every aspect: not only through its cost management but in addition, via the exploration and exploitation of any business opportunity. Our shipping industry has demonstrated that not only we can survive global competition but we can also dominate it.

* Fourthly, shipping follows a never-ending cyclical and volatile route. And as such it requires enormous resilience: to withstand downturns and upturns, to revive and emerge as more profitable than before, to exploit every and each opportunity through the good and bad times.

Competitiveness

The adaptability of the shipping industry is one of the unique virtues of its competitiveness. And as demonstrated through the years, the adaptability of Greek Shipping is unparalleled.

All the aforementioned virtues - openness and adaptability - are summarized in one word:

Competitiveness!

Competitiveness is the element mostly missing from the development model of the Greek Economy.

Competitiveness is the element most persisting and characterizing Greek Shipping. Maybe because Greek Shipping does not necessitate the support of the Greek state and consequently it exists and develops far and beyond its boundaries.

When we hear the "moto" that Greece is either too "small" or too "anachronistic" or too "pampered" to become competitive, we shall respond as follows: Check out Greek Shipping!

Our shipping protagonists are a coroner example and evidential of the fact that competitiveness is part of our Greek culture and essence. Competitiveness is the modern name of what we used to refer to as the "Greek demon".

Competitiveness is always a top priority. But especially in times of crisis, such as the current one, when our country is facing dramatic fiscal imbalances and debt issues, competitiveness is our highest priority.

Greek Presidency

- Within the Greek shipping policy, we have set specific priorities and invited other states to collaborate. We have clearly stipulated that regional policies and rationales of over taxation, stemming from relevant

perceptions of the bureaucratic Brussels and other states with competitive interests, are harming the interests of European shipping and as a result funds are being diverted to Asia.

- Simultaneously, we aim to strengthen the European strategy for the "Blue Growth" and hence employment, as well as measures and policies that will bolster the competitiveness of the European ports, facilitate maritime traffic, whilst diminishing the administrative burden and simplifying the administrative procedures, targeting to enhance the overall competitiveness of Greek and European shipping.

As Ministry:

- We intent to strengthen the National Registry. At every opportunity and in every way we endeavor to attract more ships to Greek flag, as we firmly believe that this will greatly contribute to the growth of the national capital, will highlight the impact of the Greek Shipping in the national economy and will re-enforce our international negotiating position.

- We venture to upgrade the Naval Education. The increased interest of the younger generation to join the profession is a "momentum" of significant importance for the foreseeable future. Ensuring a good educational system, so that young sailors will be able to gain a deep understanding of new technologies, especially the ones incorporated into the newly manufactured vessels is highly critical.

In order to attract Greeks in the naval profession, we shall inform them about the possibilities that the sea has to offer so as to develop a methodical approach, developing progressively from an early age and throughout the schooling, so as to re-create the Naval Education that made Greece the global leading force in Shipping. Moreover, in the years to come, the competition will be intensified with the anticipated entry into the maritime sector of Asian nations, currently undergoing great growth.

- We intend to restructure the port services aiming not only to safeguard more efficiently our maritime borders but also to offer a better service by

the operators of our Navy. Because we have acknowledged that the Coast Guard an integral part of our ministry.. In addition as a result of the restructuring of the Ministry and the Port Authorities we can now serve more consistently and effectively this goal.

- Ports Policy

In this regard our policy is the continuous modernization and upgrading of port infrastructure in the country, in conjunction with the upgrading of the provision of port services.

The latest integration processes concerning the on-going port projects, are being conducted under the tripartite dogma of: improvement - ameliorate - modernization. For each island, but also for the country itself our Greek ports have become "energies of growth".

And it seems to me the time is right to realign overall ports policy in our country:

The efficient administration of ports, the improved port facilities and efficient service to our islands that will essentially attract investment and create employment.

Ports' development goes along with the new country's production model as it is an integral way that will create employment and thus will provide additional state revenue. Until recently, Greek policy regarding its ports was limited to infrastructural changes at a local level and served just the internal trade.

Today, our policy has greatly changed. Hellenic ports shall now be enabled to utilize all their possibilities and attract investment based on its international appealing competitiveness and outward orientation. For us this is a high priority.

Piraeus port is an indicative example of this new strategy. The biggest port in the country has today drastically converted its image, taking on a metropolitan profile in the Mediterranean sea. In this context it is crucial for us to see OLP –COSCO Friendly Settlement approved by the European Commission, as this **agreement involves an additional investment of 230 million €** In a few days time this agreement will be

submitted to the Parliament, requesting for bidders for the sale of OLP majority share capital.

Conclusion

Hellenic shipping is a leading and competitive player at a global level. It has thus gained and still retains world leadership. It provides to Greece a lot without any cost for the country.

We shall thus correspond to such unlimited support with a modernized National Shipping Policy. Shipping is one of our national assets and as such any selfserving exploitation from the political parties, has no right to interfere with its functioning.

In every glorious moment Greece achieved miracles with its shipping.

In every difficult period Greece revived through its shipping.

It is hight time for Greece to reciprocate such support and assist shipping that now seeks to exit crisis for our the country to regain is leading position in shipping as in its glorious past.

Competitive!