

Your Excellency,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

esteemed guests and dear friends,

It is a special honour for me to greet you as your host today and for the exhibition hall of the National bank to be adorned with pictures from life around the Greek seas.

My satisfaction is so much the greater since the settings of these wonderful photographs lie in countries with which Serbia has exceptionally good, cordial relations and with which it has for centuries nurtured connections and cooperation in many fields. We feel a mutual need to continue strengthening our ties that originated so long ago and that endure, enriched also by the Orthodox dedication of honest closeness and love.

We deeply appreciate the Greek position of constant support to the European aspirations of Serbia and her accession to the European Union. The symbolism of this is apparent in the fact that accession negotiations between Serbia and the European Union have begun precisely in the period of the Greek Presidency, and that Greece was at Serbia's side at that historic moment.

It is therefore dear to us that precisely the exhibition in the National Bank of Serbia has been chosen as the culminating cultural event of the Embassy of Greece in Belgrade during the Greek Presidency of the Union.

Nor should we forget that Greece is one of the most important investors in our country, especially with significant investments in the field of finance. The cooperation between our two countries, two peoples, manifests itself in many ways. Our proximity and understanding is not limited to the economic sphere. Enhancing the cultural heritage through an emphasis on common elements that connect our peoples and authentic details from both countries that are closely intertwined is also a special adornment in the preservation of our cultural birthright. Our closeness and mutual respect has demonstrated itself through the difficult times endured by our countries, when the humanity of our tried and tested friends has been shown in practice. We shall never, and must never forget this.

As you are aware, Greece has for many years been the favourite tourist destination for citizens of Serbia, precisely due to the far-flung fame of the beauty of the Greek seas, coastlines and cities, adorned in the Byzantine blue of freedom, the heavens and the infinite. The magical beauty of the parting day is brought to us in these photographs that invite us for a moment to sense the salty smell of the sea, and from the distant horizon to hear the murmur of the relentless waves. All this gives us the greatest satisfaction, and in the coming days this space will be decorated in the Greek colours, blue and white.

I call on you all to start on a journey through time, through these very photographs.

I proclaim the exhibition open!