

Distinguished Rector, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to warmly welcome you, even under the limitations of digital technology, in Athens. Needless to say, we would love to have you all in our beautiful country, but COVID had different plans.

I thank you for accepting the invitation and for your participation in this conference, and especially for your academic and personal interest for the history of my country, the history of Greece, at this important historical juncture for us. Our bicentennial celebration of our modern Greece – the 1821 Revolution.

I take the opportunity to personally thank the Rector of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Mr. Thanos Dimopoulos, as well as all the distinguished Greek academicians who have contributed in the organization of this conference. It is a major undertaking that has been in the making for the past 2 years.

It aspires, not just to be a forum of sharing scientific research knowledge, but also to bring to light aspects of Greek history and The Greek Revolution, that have not surfaced before. It features and focuses on the common elements that the Greek Revolution shares with other monumental events in other parts of the Western World – the US War of Independence, and the French Revolution - highlighting their timeless relationship.

For Piraeus Bank and me personally, it is a great honor to be part of this celebration, and it is our pleasure to support this event. I truly believe that this event will be a major milestone in the cascade of national events, celebrating the 200th Anniversary of the Greek Revolution. An anniversary that historically marks the return of Hellenism to foreground of history and the beginning of modern Greece.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today we are in the midst of an unprecedented situation on a global scale. It is a situation with, yet to be fully understood,

but potentially dramatic consequences. It is almost another kind of war. A unique war as, this time, humanity is bound together as one, against the enemy – the virus.

In unity and solidarity, the world is determined to repel this invisible enemy and prevent the reversal of History. Embedded in this battle, is a historical lesson that remains relevant at all times and across societies. It is a lesson that we, as Greeks, know too well from our history, but we have ignored several times, to our detriment. And every time we ignored this lesson, the consequences were disastrous. The lesson is simple. With unity and solidarity, we create miracles, while when divided we can destroy ourselves.

The 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrates an occurrence of unity and solidarity. It celebrates the 200 years since the Greek people started an asymmetric struggle against one of the superpowers then. They succeeded because they were solidly united by a vision of a free and independent Greek state.

This lesson could not be more relevant today, as the global cooperation and a (more or less) united approach has yielded unprecedented results, in record time, in the form of vaccines to fight the pandemic.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For our country, this anniversary is a moment and an opportunity to assimilate the lessons learned – successes and failures - over the course of the past 200 years. It is an opportunity for national self-reflection and interpretation, as well as an opportunity to re-approach the future, embedding the lessons learned. It is an opportunity for us Greeks, to re-invent and improve the “narrative” as Harari puts it, in his famous book “Sapiens”. It is an opportunity to create the path for even greater achievements in the next 200 years. As long we do not forget the lessons, history has taught us.

The burden is on all of us, that we have inherited the fruits of labor of this struggle. We have the responsibility and the obligation to do our best to secure a better future for the next generations, in a way that is inextricably linked to the past, but

looks forward with confidence and self-assurance, in the future.

It is my hope that this conference, which brings together some of the finest international minds in the field of history will contribute towards this objective.

I would like to thank you all, once again, for your participation in this important conference, and your contribution to the modern scientific research on the Greek Revolution.