Athens, 7.11.2019

**Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis’ speech at the start of the proceedings of the “Greece 2021” Bicentennial Committee**

Mr. President of the Hellenic Democracy,

Your Beatitude,

Mr. President of Parliament,

Ladies and gentlemen,

 “In short, the Greek revolution did human nature a particular honor. Because the most glorious and most didactic of all spectacles portrayed throughout History is the resurrection of a fallen nation”.

Two hundred years later, the epilogue of the “History of the Greek Revolution”, written by Spyridon Trikoupis in mid-19th century, may very well be the prologue of a new approach to this event.

For it is a great event when a Nation rises up, struggles and is finally liberated. And it is an honor to all when this Nation preserves universal values over time, not just as artifacts in a museum, but as vital elements fuelling its future.

Two centuries later, we welcome the uprising of the Greeks as an anniversary, but also as a historic event that is constantly evolving, as the year 1821 is both a defining moment in time and a breaking point. At a time when Europe was in the clutches of the Holy Alliance, a struggle for national liberation broke out and finally prevailed, with a state emerging just nine years later.

In the year 2021 it will be confirmed that this significant shift in the European History became the axis of a turbulent course of events in the eastern parts of the Continent and the Mediterranean.

A Nation is reborn and, having experienced many vicissitudes, prospers more than any other nation in the Balkans. The 200th anniversary of the Greek Revolution deserves a multi-faceted approach. It deserves to be viewed in the bright light of historical experience, through the lens of the wisdom from lessons learned and as a steady and positive projection to the future.

In other words, the anniversary is a great opportunity for a bold assessment, an invigorating reflection. It is an opportunity to reflect on the values of national self-awareness and to come to a new understanding of them. It is, after all, a re-acquaintance with our collective self and an opportunity for Greece to regroup domestically, to reintroduce itself in Europe and the world as a whole with its modern identity.

The 200th anniversary is a matter for all Greeks, all across the country and everywhere in the world. When the Revolution broke out, young Greeks from all over Europe joined the “Sacred Band” and fought heroically.

Today, we are in need of a different kind of “Sacred Band”, formed by the Greeks who were forced to leave their country due to the crisis and now they are burning with desire to return. This Sacred Band will also be formed by those who live and prosper in “second homes” without forgetting their native country. It is those who are now coming one step closer to Greece, since they will be able to vote from their permanent residence abroad.

Such an anniversary, however, Ambassadors, belongs to many others beyond our nation, namely the Philhellenes through the ages and everyone else who were and are still inspired by the visions of the American, French and Greek revolutions.

The two centuries that have passed are steps that the whole civilized world has taken. And they concern every citizen who recognizes and follows this undercurrent, often indistinguishable thread that links the Republic of ancient Greece to the 19th century desire for freedom. And, then, it bridges the claims of the 20th century with the great challenges of the 21st century. After all, the real meaning of 1821 is enduring and universal!

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Greek Revolution of 1821 was a renaissance of the backbone of the country, as the President of the Parliament also said. The inhabitants from Roumeli, Moreas, the Islands, Epirus, Macedonia, Arvanites, Phanariots, joined all Greeks inside and outside the subjugated country and they set in motion an alive Nation, with brilliant successes, but also with painful failures.

They formed a nation that - eventually – expanded geographically, its population thrived and prospered. And this must always be kept in mind.

The democratic spirit of the Constitutions of the Revolution was so deeply instilled in the political life of the country that the universal suffrage was adopted in 1844 and the principle of declared confidence of Parliament was established in 1875.

Consequently, Greece has been faithful to the liberal parliamentary democracy and a political pioneer among European states.

At another level, the country, through conventional alliances, annexed new provinces into national territory and incorporated Greeks into the backbone of the country. It paid, however, a high price, with the loss of homelands of Hellenism and dark pages in its history full of dictatorships, divisions and civil conflicts.

As much as we are inspired by triumphs, so should we learn from tragedies.

So let's look ourselves in the mirror with courage and honesty. We will appreciate not only the glow of the look but also the facial wrinkles of modern Greece because the balance is overwhelmingly positive: During these years, Greece has finally overcome the misery of "the poor that begs”, as our national poet wrote. It was transformed form an old small Ottoman province into a strong European country, leaving the crisis behind and renewing its faith in the future.

Greece is again "as valiant as it once were", as mentioned in our national anthem.

I am sure that this same spirit infuses the mission of Greece’s 2021 Bicentennial Committee.

It is the spirit of unity, moderation and creative respect that will be expressed with the language, the style and the ethos which will highlight the significance and the magnitude of the Revolution today.

Our aim is to re-assess the national uprising of the Greeks as a dynamic process of a European, even a worldwide magnitude, as a milestone of breaking with our bad past, but also as an indicator for our future!

In this respect, the organizational structure is called upon to serve this celebration and respond, I believe, to its multidimensional character.

The head of the Commission has demonstrated her administrative capacity and her commitment. The members from Greece and abroad will offer their knowledge and experience in many different areas in which they have been outstanding. The lawmakers, the Hellenic Parliament Foundation and the government officials will contribute their own means to the project.

It is our pleasure to present the first 31 members of this important Committee today:

- The eminent/ top US and UK academics, Mark Mazower, Roderick Beaton and Richard Clogg.

-Greek Professors from abroad: Eleni Glikatzi Arveler, Stathis Kalyva and Dimitris Gondikas.

- Vassilis Rapanos of the Academyof Athens and Metropolitan Ignatius of the Church of Greece.

-Historians such as Paschalis Kitromilidis, Costas Kostis, Evanthis Chatzivasiliou, Maria Efthimiou, Elpida Vogli and Ioanna Laliotou will work together.

-Political and social scientists such as Yiannis Voulgaris, Nikos Mouzelis and Aristides Hatzis, but also economists such as Napoleon Maravega will work together too.

- Stavros Zoumboulakis, Theodoros Kourentzis, Despina Mouzaki, Dimitris Papaioannou and Catherine Kamilakis will be the representatives of the Arts and Literature.

- The team of Artificial Intelligence, Mathematics, Medicine and Genetics researchers: Konstantinos Daskalakis, Eleftheria Zengini, Maria Themeli, Nicolas Negroponte, Christos Papadimitriou Papadimitriou, will mark the shift towards the future.

- Markos Veremis and Gregory Papadopoulos will be in charge of innovation and entrepreneurship.

I only mention their names, since the list of their titles and their honors is endless. All of them are recognized and prestigious members of the international scientific community. They have a lot to offer in our effort bringing their knowledge and experience in many sectors.

I highly appreciate your offer. We will be by your side. I expect that the 200th anniversary of Greek Revolution will be linked with the challenges ahead of us.

The Greek Revolution of 1821 was the beginning, and the 200th anniversary is a milestone towards the 4th industrial revolution, artificial intelligence and the challenges lying ahead such as the new major inequalities, the refugees, the migration and mainly the climate change.

It seems the tides of History often “make fun” of peoples’ stories.  There was a time, Mr. President, when we claimed what we have been deprived of, but now we are called upon to protect our goods, the most important being the natural and  cultural environment. At the same time, we are trying to reposition Greece in the world by means of a broader national extroversion. Then was the birth today is the rebirth!

Ladies and gentlemen,

In bringing this speech to a close, I would like mention another game of history. A century ago, plans were being made for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Greek Revolution. But the outcome of the war did not allow it. However, the public debate on the content as well as on the style of the events was intense.

I mention the article of Kathimerini on March 14, 1921 signed by “Ariel”, who was the historian and later academic Dionisios Kokkinos:

“The 100th anniversary of Greek Revolution is a major accountability of a great legacy.  We owe to show not only what Greece did from 1821 to 1829, but what Greece accomplished during 100 years of  freedom”.

It is the duty of our generation to show what we achieved what we have achieved during two centuries of freedom. But we also have to be accountable to the present, to the future, to the Greeks, to the citizens of the world, to those who live around us, and mainly to those who come dashing from the future!!

I wish the committee every success!