**Speech by Gianna Angelopoulos, President of the Greece 2021 Committee, on the occasion of the inauguration ceremony of the Greece 2021 Committee**

**on November 7, 2019 in the Hellenic Parliament**

The 200 years since the Greek Revolution of 1821 - the event that led to the foundation of the modern Greek State - serve as a landmark for allGreeks today.

The celebration of the Revolution’s bicentenary will, without a doubt, have the appropriate luster to reflect the symbolism of the 200 years since the Revolution’s proclamation. At the same time, the culmination of this 200-year-course is an ideal opportunity to take stock of the past and to deepen self-knowledge on a national and individual level. It is an opportunity for us to not only recognize all our achievements, but also to recognize all that we have lost, to determine not just where we are, but also where we want to go. It is an opportunity to measure up to the future, but also an opportunity to introduce a new Greece to the world. To engage in a discourse with the world as Greeks of today about who we are and what we can become. As members of a state that is modern, democratic and an advanced and integral part of Europe – which we have always shone light upon and whichhas also constantly given us light.

1. We are therefore called upon to showcase Greece as it is and to capture and describe it not just for us, but also for those with whom we are conversing. A Greece made up of, among others, Thessaloniki with its unique cultural mix, Iraklion in Crete, home to the Foundation for Research and Technology, Soufli in Thrace with its incomparable silk textiles, Ptolemaida and Kozani whose infrastructure laid the foundation for the electrification of the whole of Greece, the Nymfaio and the Arcturos wildlife refuge in Florina, Ioannina with its age-old tradition of silver- and gold-smiths, the island of Chios with its shipping tradition, the hundreds of vineyards in West Macedonia, Santorini, Crete and throughout the Peloponnese with their award-winning, world-renowned wines.

This is a Greece that produces, that innovates, that has an esteemed scientific robustness; a Greece that serves as a pillar of stability in the wider region.

2. However, tracing the course of the last 200 years is not just about the country itself, but also about its people. Foremost, about those who with the fruits of their labour in all corners of the world, supported and continue to support their homeland, building hospitals, universities, schools, and foundations, and also by constructing bridges, churches and squares in their home villages. Such as, to mention just the earlier generations, Zappas, Varvakis, Tositsas, Arsakis, Ionidis, Rhallis, Benakis, Onassis, Niarchos and so many others.

But, it also about those Greeks who have left their indelible mark on science and the arts, on sports, technology and culture. Such as Rigas Ferraios, Adamantios Korais, the biologist George Papanikolaou, Maria Callas, Nikos Skalkotas, as well as Alexandros Mavrokordatos, Melina Mercouri, wrestler Jim Londos, composer Iannis Xenakis, poet Constantine Kavafy, philosopher Cornelius Kastoriadis, mathematician Constantine Karatheodory, author Nikos Kazantzakis and cinema director Theodoros Angelopoulos.

All of them, alongside hundreds of others, make up the Greece that we are called upon to describe. As do Giannis Antetokoumpo and Kahi Kakiashvili, but also Imam Zacharias, who was born in Greece to Syrian migrant parents and came first in the entrance exams for the School of Naval Architecture & Marine Engineering at the Metsovion National Technical University of Athens. He is grateful to his home country, Greece, as it gave him all the opportunities he needed to succeed.

3. The Bicentenary of the Greek Revolution of course calls upon us to talk about the Revolution itself. To approach it not only as a momentous occasion in our national history, but also as a significant part of global history, besides other great revolutions, such as the American and French Revolutions. Not to treat it only as we learned about it at school, as a series of glorious heroic deeds or as acts of martyrdom, bravery and self-sacrifice, but by showcasing its global impact as well. Showing how it was connected to global upheavals occurring at the time in Europe and America. Recognising Philhellenism as one of the first European ideas, as an integral part of the new national identities in Europe.

4. Finally, honouring the 200 years of national Independence would have no real meaning to us, if we were not to speak of how we imagine Greece in the future. The Greece of 2025, of 2031, of 2051. What we want to change; what to want to achieve; what our needs are and how we envisage fulfilling them. We will not only share this vision amongst ourselves, but we will project it everywhere, seeking alliances and synergies so as to best achieve this. The year 2021 is not just a landmark after a course of 200 years; it is also a window through which we are called upon to see our future. This is what we have to showcase, and this is what we will do.

The *“Greece 2021”* Committee, which I have the honour to preside over, will respect the facts and stick to the measure of things; it will keep the necessary wisdom and reserve; it will plan multifaceted activities so as to showcase the Bicentenary events in Greece and around the world. At the same time, it will seek to discuss and cooperate closely with Foundations, Organisations and with civic groups that plan to take similar initiatives, so as to connect with them and include their actions in the overall planning because the Bicentenary concerns all Greeks around the world, without discrimination orranking. It is a unique opportunity to prove that, apart from our ability to make individual achievements, we can come together for common goals and collectively achieve spectacular results. I am therefore certain that the response to our call to join our efforts will be unconditional and universal.

We have the good fortune that members of the Committee are remarkable individuals with great achievements in their fields in Greece, as well as inEurope and America.

Their participation constitutes a guarantee for the success of this venture and we owe them a deep gratitude for the willingness with which they responded to this invitation, knowing that they will do important work without reward other than the joy of participating in something special. After all, the aim is for the whole project to proceed without putting a burden on public funds.

Our aim is to achieve the substantial involvement of as many Greeks as possible, asking them all to not only participate in activities and events, but to also take initiatives, to submit ideas, to be motivated and to motivate others.

The new generations in particular will have a strong say. Their comprehensive participation is of huge significance and will be the touchstone ofour success. It is not enough for them to simply understand Greece’s course over the past 200 years, and to see Greece for what it is - as a modern successful country with its accomplishments and its weaknesses. The aim is for them to actively participate in planning the next steps, as they are the ones who will live and create in this country, or represent it wherever else they choose to spread their wings. We have to use all our strength to find how the young people of this country - whether they are in schools or universities, or working, or in a transitional stage seeking their future – will have a say on how they envision the country in which they will live.

We are, therefore, all called upon to jointly create a new awareness of our country, which will be far from the melancholic image of the “constantly persecuted and unfairly-treated, beleaguered Greece’, but also far from the ‘overweening smugness of the chosen ones who constitute the centre of the universe.”

The 200 years transcend us. They carry with them the force of events as they have unfolded, the sacrifices and achievements of men and women. They were built of victories and defeats. Great moments, triumphs and setbacks. Today, we find ourselves facing our own responsibility and we are called upon to measure up to ourselves. We will repay the debt owed to generations past by moving forward, with optimism, for “...horizons are knocking on our doors”   to quote another great Greek, Nikiforos Vrettakos, from his poem *The Call*.