

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΕΝΩΣΗ
ΓΙΑ ΑΤΛΑΝΤΙΚΗ
& ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΗ ΣΥΝΕΡΓΑΣΙΑ

Μέλος της ΕΝΩΣΗΣ ΑΤΛΑΝΤΙΚΟΥ ΣΥΜΦΩΝΟΥ



GREEK ASSOCIATION
FOR ATLANTIC
& EUROPEAN COOPERATION

Member of the ATLANTIC TREATY ASSOCIATION

Celebrating the Tenth Anniversary of the Atlantic Council of Serbia

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Greek Association for Atlantic and
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Belgrade

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate sincerely the Atlantic Council of Serbia and its President Mr. Vladan Zivulovic with the 10th Anniversary. I am honoured to be invited to share this very unique moment with you.

I remember very well how it all started. During my Chairmanship in ATA we changed the Constitution of ATA for a very important political reason, with a goal to pave the way for Atlantic Councils of the States that yet were not the members of NATO's Partnership for Peace Program to become a part of our family. I am now refereeing to adopting official "observers' status". The creation of Atlantic Council of Serbia was a good reason and my successor in ATA Mr. Alan Lee Williams continued effectively what we had started. From 2006 when Serbia joined PfP, your council became an "Associate Member" with all its rights.

Now let me reflect on our history on a deeper level. Greece and Serbia have historical, cultural, religious, and economic linkages, which reflect a close co-operation, model in the Balkan region.

Greece and Serbia are two old European states with strong common bonds, built already in the middle ages, and restored in particular after the liberation from the Ottomans in the early 19th century. Greece and Serbia, made several political and military alliances, and were cooperating closely on all important Balkan issues, and they were a real axe of stability and cooperation in the region during the most of the 19th and the 20th centuries.

Dedicated to national liberty, democracy and the rule of law both Serbia and Greece gave significant contribution, with their wide-known epic efforts, to the joint struggle of the Allies in both world



wars. Both Greece and Serbia had shown that they share the same values and goals with their Western Allies, France and Great Britain in the First World War, USA and Great Britain in the Second World War. Despite the fact that Yugoslavia became communist in 1945 and that the Iron Curtain had separated Serbia from Greece, the strong and continual friendship was only for a while in the dark shadow.

Furthermore, it was during the early 1950s that Tito's communist Yugoslavia with Greece and Turkey entered the "Balkan Pact" which, in a way has linked Yugoslavia, and Serbia as its component Republic, with NATO countries, making this contacts and cooperation fruitful for the regional stability.

Greece is a significant NATO member since its founding years and a pole of stability in the Eastern Mediterranean. Since the collapse of communism in 1990s, Greece emerged as a key player in building stability in the Western Balkans as well, as the only NATO member from the Balkans until 2002. Despite all difficulties, wars and bombings during the 1990s Greece remained loyal friend to Serbia and the Serbian nation, but not to recent Serbian regimes, and Milosevic regime in particular.

During these difficult years of the 1990s, Greece was offering its diplomatic services as bona fide mediator in rising inter-ethnic conflict, striving to help in negotiations that will lead to the peace process and gradual reconciliation. After the democracy was eventually restored in Serbia in October 2000, Greece was the first to acknowledge the legality of the change of the regime and to facilitate Belgrade's efforts to quickly rebuild its ties with the rest of the Western World, after a decade of turbulent discords, animosities and

conflicts. Rebuild a country ruined by internal strife, economic embargo and war damages was and rather difficult task.



I referred to the history because what we have achieved by today is the sum of what happened in the past and to design the future we must consult the past.

Within this context, the establishment of Atlantic Council of Serbia in a new democratic Serbia was an important element in building her Euro-Atlantic future. Thus, GAAEC's contribution in establishing the Atlantic Council of Serbia was another proof of long-lasting friendship and cooperation. Therefore, I will profit with this occasion to highlight again the importance of our joint efforts to build a long-term stability in the region, through various programs and practical cooperation.

The integration of the Western Balkans into the EU is the foundation of Greece's policy and vision for this region. It is in this context as our Minister of Foreign Affairs stated during his recent visit to Belgrade, *"Greece launched "Agenda 2014" initiative. By 2014, Greece wants to ensure that the Western Balkans are well on their way to the European Union."*

The strategic importance of Serbia for the long-term stability in the Balkans is wide-known but not always fully evaluated. As a main crossroad of terrestrial, fluvial and aerial ways in the centre of the region, with her political weight, excellent human resources and respectable economic potential, Serbia will be of significant importance for NATO and its long-term goals in this region. After Serbia has recently fulfilled all its legal obligations to the Hague tribunal, it is now moment for us to help her enter into the new phase towards Europe and Euro-Atlantic family. We are hopeful, that Serbia will not miss this opportunity and that will before long join our Euro-Atlantic family.



Serbia now is a “security provider and not a security consumer”. I refer to progress that you have already made in your relations with NATO and your relations with the European Common Security and Defence Policy.

I know very well about the intention of your country to take part in EU’s “Atalanta Operation” with your Navy Officers. This would play a crucial role on fighting piracy and it will be very valuable for all of us, as well as your contribution to the Peace operations in Lebanon and Cyprus.

Concerning NATO, we need to mention the improvement of your cooperation with the Alliance

I am sure that the development of the political dialogue and the practical cooperation of Serbia with NATO, at the highest level, is to the interest of Serbia, the Alliance and all the states of the region.

We all know that your country has indeed taken many constructive steps since 2006.

Recently, Greece has welcomed the submission of the third “Individual Partnership Action Plan Program” (IPAP), as well as the intention to conclude a PfP “Status of Forces Agreement” (SOFA). One of the priorities of the Individual Partnership Action Plan is “Public Information and Science.” This is why the advanced cooperation through the Atlantic Council of Serbia is very important to deliver information to the public.

Dear Friends,

Membership in EuroAtlantic Structures is nothing more than the promise and the commitment to be a part of the community and values.



Public Support guarantees the political will and provides the legitimacy of the signature to be member of any Alliance or international Union. But Public Support requires an educated public and an educated public means that it understands the reason of being member for example of NATO or EU and how this effects each individual life

Ladies and Gentlemen,

it is not a secret that public opinion in Serbia as well as in my country Greece isn't so favorable to NATO, for the reasons that we all know. But at the same time, concerning Greece, its membership in NATO that started 59 years ago at the same time with Turkey, has provided the necessary security environment in the framework in which Greece made its way to European Union. Personally I think that this paradigm applies in one or the other way to your country too.

Once again thank you very much for your invitation. I wish success in all present and future endeavours. GAAEC is as always fully available for all kinds of useful cooperation in building our common future.