

Thank you Mr President

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to participate today in this important business forum. I would like to congratulate the President as well as all the people of the Greek African Chamber of Commerce, for organizing it. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we steadily support your initiatives and we are ready to listen to your proposals for future projects.

And now it is the perfect timing, as our country is on a steady growth path, and is rebounding strongly. Just to mention that some days ago The European Commission considerably raised its forecast for Greek growth this year, to 7,1% compared to its previous estimate for 4.3% and the government's latest projection for 6.1%. This is a very promising sign, which indicates that the Greek economy is gaining traction and momentum to go forward.

Greece has a long history of close relations with African countries, which we currently look forward to enhancing and deepening. In fact, Zambia presents great potential for business and trade cooperation.

The bilateral trade between Greece and Zambia can be improved significantly, since the potential in specific sectors is very strong. Our bilateral trade relations have remained steady over the last few years, but there is significant room for improvement and diversification.

Bilateral cooperation can be promoted in a wide spectrum of areas, from infrastructure and energy to agriculture, and even tourism. Our companies, with significant experience in projects all over the world -including African countries, can assist in the development of all types of urban and rural projects in Zambia. Forging synergies with local companies and exchanging expertise and best practises, shall pave the way for positive results, to the benefit of the local communities and to the benefit of the people.

The crucial factor in exploiting the potential for economic cooperation is the establishment of communication channels between Greek companies and their counterparts in Zambia. We therefore encourage and actively support initiatives like today's business forum. In addition, the presence in Lusaka of major Greek companies from the sectors of pharmaceuticals, food products, plastics, construction materials, infrastructure development and waste water treatment, is an excellent opportunity to actively explore business opportunities.

In this framework, Greece can also contribute its expertise in the development of the agricultural sector in Zambia. The primary sector in Greece has traditionally proved of pivotal importance for our economy, especially with regards to the welfare of our rural areas. Renewable Energy Sources, sustainable farming and aquaculture are only indicative areas of potential cooperation.

In particular, the energy sector is an area where mutual synergies could develop. I am confident that Greek experience could be a valuable component for developing new projects or for upgrading existent power networks in Zambia.

I would also like to take this opportunity to mention that the business climate in Greece has become very favorable for potential investors. The policy changes that have taken place over the past years, coupled with the decisive implementation of reforms and privatizations, have rendered Greece an attractive place to invest and provide opportunities for expanding the activities of businesses in both goods and services sectors.

I know the challenges that business owners face and I believe that Greek and Zambian companies, working together, are well placed to face the challenges of trading and investing in the 21st century.