

**ΟΜΙΛΙΑ**  
**Γενικού Γραμματέα**  
**Διεθνών Οικονομικών Σχέσεων & Εξωστρέφειας**  
**Υπουργείου Εξωτερικών**  
**κ. Ιωάννη Σμυρλή**  
**ΣΤΗΝ ΔΙΑΔΙΚΤΥΑΚΗ ΕΚΔΗΛΩΣΗ ΤΟΥ ΕΛΛΗΝΟ-ΑΦΡΙΚΑΝΙΚΟΥ**  
**ΕΠΙΜΕΛΗΤΗΡΙΟΥ ΕΜΠΟΡΙΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΑΠΤΥΞΗΣ**  
**ΑΘΗΝΑ, 08.06.2022**

Your Excellency Deputy Minister,

Your Excellencies Ambassadors,

Dear President of the Hellenic-African Chamber of Commerce,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to warmly thank you for your kind invitation and congratulate you Mr. President of the Hellenic-African Chamber of Commerce as well as your team for organizing this event.

It is a pleasure for me to be with you and particularly in light of the current challenging geopolitical developments, where there is a growing need for cooperation with Africa, and particularly with South Africa, a key country not only for the EU but also for Greece.

These events promote the interaction among companies, thus creating the necessary business environment for the private sector in order to undertake the so needed market initiatives.

The role of the Hellenic-African Chamber of Commerce and Development, a member of European Business Council for Africa (EBCAM) is important, as for the past twenty three years, it serves its declared purposes by:

- promoting the economic and trade relations between Greece and African countries
- supporting and consulting medium size enterprises in identifying business and investment opportunities in Africa
- providing information on African economies, advising and facilitating African business activities in Greece
- organizing briefings about Africa and individual countries
- advancing and organizing trade and investment missions to African countries
- cooperating with Greek and African diplomatic authorities, European Chambers and Organizations dealing with Africa and participating in European and other programs concerning Africa.

Economic cooperation is a major driving force for peace and stability. Our world is entering a new complex period. The COVID-19 pandemic is still generating a lot of uncertainty in the world economy and in many aspects in the global trade. In addition, the political instability, deriving from regional armed conflicts in Africa and elsewhere, as well as the ongoing war in Ukraine, are also questioning the rules-based international world order.

Financial sanctions and relevant counter measures in important countries of the world economy, disruption in trade supply chains, inflation, rising commodity prices, energy crises, climate change, potential food & products' shortages are modern challenges that both Greece and South Africa should tackle.

To this end, enhanced and continuous regional and bilateral cooperation in all realms could act as a stabilizing factor. In parallel, the business communities of the two countries could greatly contribute towards this direction. Today's meeting is an excellent example of building synergies between both public and private sector of the two countries.

For Greece, South Africa is a trade partner with great potential. South Africa has the second largest and most developed economy in the African continent and is a member of the G-20 Group, not to mention that the Stock Exchange of Johannesburg is listed among the top-20 stock markets of the world. At the same time, it is used as a hub for neighbouring markets (Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of the Congo-DRC, Angola, Botswana, Namibia, e.t.c.).

According to Greek Statistical Authority-ELSTAT data, **Greek exports** in 2021 recovered and reached € 74,5 million, increased by 32,4% compared to 2020, while our imports amounted to € 76,8 million, with an increase of 25,4%. Greece recorded a deficit of € 2,3 million in the bilateral trade in 2021.

In the past, **Greek investments** have been made in South Africa in the following sectors: commercial banking services, games and services (lotto), production of plastics, winery, production of ice cream,

production of commercial refrigeration appliances, production of aluminum products, shipping services, installation of photovoltaic systems, technology services, waste management. On the other hand, **South African companies** are interested in making investments and collaborating with Greek stakeholders, especially in the field of pharmaceuticals.

After a period of investments' stagnation those recent developments are very encouraging, but there is ample room for improvement; bilateral economic and trade relations must be further developed. There are **business opportunities** in port infrastructure, environmental equipment and technologies, construction, medical equipment and pharmaceuticals.

Our goal for Greece is to become an important economic, trade and investment partner of South Africa by creating synergies and encouraging cooperation in sectors where both countries have comparative advantages, complementarity and mutual benefit.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you are all well aware, the **Greek economy** is on the road to post-COVID recovery with rapid economic growth rate. In particular, Greece's economy is expected to grow at a robust 3-4% rate, following a better-than-expected rebound in 2021, which represents one of the fastest growth rates in Europe. Moreover, Greece also saw record **Foreign Direct Investment in 2021** – reaching €5 billion and marking the largest FDI inflow since 2002 – confirming that our country is on the right track and in a dynamic growth phase. Greece is rated among the Top 10 investment destinations in Europe. This fact reflects the wide range of attractive opportunities available in the Greek

market, as well as the coordinated efforts of the last several years to create a competitive and positive business-friendly environment.

Greek economy is moving towards a new era. Substantial reforms have been implemented. Both investments and exports are now being supported by the Greek government. Economic Diplomacy provides all the necessary tools for those interested in doing business, as well as in exporting goods and services.

At the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** we attach great importance both in supporting exports and promoting investments. That's why we incorporated under a single and coherent structure all competent units for economic extroversion. Furthermore, we established the '**Gateway**' of Extroversion.

Enterprise Greece and the Export Credit Greece (former Export Credit Insurance Organization-OAEP) are the two main flexible support bodies for extroversion that are currently under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. By integrating those extroversion structures in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we aiming at the best coordination and exploitation of the available resources.

Our will is to support Greek companies to strengthen their export activity.

Amid the pandemic, Enterprise Greece adapted really fast to the new conditions and activated all the digital tools so as to train Greek exporters and acquire the necessary supplies for a successful digital presence on the global electronic platforms, taking advantage of EG's relevant know-how and experience.

In the area of **Export Credit Insurance**, we restructured the institutional framework of ECIO, in order to provide a series of new products to insure both exports and technical projects in new markets on very competitive terms. Exporters shall take advantage of all these new trade opportunities.

At the same time we take full advantage of the existing network of 60 **Offices of Economic and Commercial Affairs** of the Greek Embassies in 51 countries, which are by definition the antennas of our system abroad, establishing bonds worldwide, we facilitate the internationalization of Greek companies in foreign markets, by promoting cooperation, common values and a closer understanding between different peoples and cultures.

At this point, I would also like to mention the **National Strategy for Extroversion** that constitutes a tangible product of our new perception of Economic Diplomacy. The National Strategy for Extroversion integrates all actions of relevant stakeholders of both public and private sectors (Ministries, Chambers, Associations and Unions). The National Strategy for Extroversion includes 670 actions with specific actions per country and per sector, covering all realms of economic diplomacy. Specifically, South Africa is among our target countries. Having said that I would like to thank the Hellenic-African Chamber of Commerce and Development for its constructive cooperation so far, which we expect will continue.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There is great potential of collaboration between our countries for both Greek and South African entrepreneurs. The Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs is

willing and ready to support all efforts in order to help entrepreneurship go even further and to make investments and trade flourish as well.

Thank you for your kind attention.