

As both of our countries have a long tradition of sailing the rich waters of the Mediterranean, it's quite obvious that "O'LI I'MASTE STIN I'DIA VA'RKA" = (we're all in the same boat) today, looking out on the stormy political, economic and social horizon; we can see that there are calm seas ahead as well as rough waters. We need to find a way to steer this ship into a safe harbor: a destination that will ultimately prove to be a better place than the point from which we originally set out. From energy resource acquisitions to financial markets to climate change, which is literally and figuratively affecting our horizon, we need to work together so as to avoid today's tempests and face the future with a greater degree of self-confidence and optimism.

The actions we take today will determine our success or failure in the face of unprecedented political and economic challenges. As we formulate our strategy in facing up to these challenges, we should remember that our two nations (whether we chose to admit it or not) are closely linked, economically, politically and culturally. The demands which are being placed on both our nations will require a concerted effort on both sides of the Aegean if we hope to keep this ship afloat in the uncharted waters of today's global economy; that is why there is no doubt in my mind that now, more than ever, cooperation and the establishment, wherever possible, of mutually beneficial goals and strategies should be a mainstay of our policies.

At this critical juncture in our history, we are fortunate to have pragmatic and forward thinking individuals at the helm of both our countries, not unlike the

time when Venizelos and Ataturk set the foundations for peace and mutually beneficial cooperation between our two countries, under much more difficult circumstances than those which we are faced with today. So instead of looking to “outsiders” to provide answers to our “family arguments”, as we have done in recent years, now is the perfect time us to work together to find novel solutions for the problems that still haunt us from decades past, with an eye on securing our peoples’ and the region’s best interests.

If we focus our attention on strengthening the global standing of our region by supporting each other and coordinating our efforts wherever possible, rather than wasting valuable resources on pointless confrontations, we could make tremendous improvements in the areas which need it the most, such as linking the infrastructure between our two countries so as to improve trade or perhaps developing mutual energy projects to take advantage of all the renewable energy our region has to offer. While each one of us is responsible to a constituency and would like to highlight to our citizens the ways in which we have been individually effective, I would posit that the ways in which we are effective as a group speak to a great accomplishment and vision of success.

Let us look at the first area that urgently needs to be addressed, energy resource and acquisition. There is no doubt in my mind that traditional energy resources are part of the energy market and will be for a long time. That being said it is important to recognize just how closely our two countries are related in this area. Besides the physical barrier we share, we also have a lot of similarities when it comes to energy needs. Not that our needs are the same but rather we

both are reliant on non-domestic sources to meet a majority of our energy. This being said we need to give extreme importance to the TGI pipeline and ensure that Turkey and Greece maintain the strong partnership as the South East European energy corridor. It will assist our own needs as well as gain us the reputation as a reliable distributor of energy to Western Europe.

Secondly, we need to establish joint projects in the area that utilize renewable energy sources such as wind energy and geothermal sources. By utilizing the resources of our own country and ensuring that the transfer of energy can easily occur between our two nations we will be better able to meet our own needs.

The second area of cooperation that is vital to both our countries is laying the groundwork for viable economic development in Southeastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean; here, the possible synergies that can serve our mutual best interests are simply too many to list. Since Turkey and Greece are the leaders of economic development in the region, it is imperative that we do whatever we can to stimulate trade between our two nations, in order to serve as an example for all of our neighbors.

Tourism is perhaps the one sector of the economy where we can achieve truly exceptional results with relatively little expense and in a short period of time, since the adoption of the necessary policies that can boost cross-border initiatives in this sector depends primarily upon political good will and close cooperation between our governments at a ministerial level.

Viewing our region as a common, wonderfully unique travel destination - rather than a collection of competing points on the map that ultimately cancels each other out - can provide both of our nations with the added value that our unparalleled cultural heritage and natural beauty deserves. Furthermore, we should seek to promote the greatest possible number of personal contacts between our two nations, on every possible level, as this is the best way for Greeks and Turks to realize that we are more closely related than we think. This is the only way to effectively counter the forces that have benefited greatly in the past by keeping us apart, in a constant state of fear and apprehension of "the other".

The third area that can show how we can assist each other is the political realm. We need to recognize that strong political ties also will help out in other areas. We need to look toward our policies on regional politics as a bridge which can assist us with economic and energy needs. In this time of such uncertainty it is time for us to be certain that as neighbors both geographically and culturally, we will be there for one another in times of crisis. As we have realized many times in the past, your pain is our pain; your crisis is our crisis, since our peoples have been brought together by the crosswinds of history and destiny. Perhaps the difficult times are the best opportunity for our nations to come together. Your Prime Minister, Mr. George Papandreou, was one of the first people to come to this simple, yet courageous realization in 1999, when he spearheaded Greece's open hearted and generous assistance efforts during the devastating earthquake in Turkey.

Our Prime Minister Mr Recep Tayyip Erdogan is here with us now to help for the financial earthquake in Greece.

Having seen how close Greece and Turkey can be in times of hardship, it is obvious that a solution for the Cyprus issue that works for both sides, while securing a lasting and just peace on the island, is long overdue. Militarily, it would be best if we could work together wherever possible, so as to be able to simultaneously reduce our military expenditures while increasing our peripheral security and working on common peace initiatives in our near abroad. For this to happen, we must however establish a long-term and deep trust of one another that is unwavering. I posit that if our countries and citizens realize what can be gained through political compromise, we all shall benefit. As I mentioned before, strong political ties can assist with regional stability and greater investment economically.

In conclusion, I return once again to my opening metaphor, and reiterate that our two countries are truly traveling on the same boat. Pulling together and working cooperatively will ensure that we will be able to sail to the calm blue waters. Yet if in times of rough seas we can put aside our differences and work side by side, we can ensure our collective arrival at the same, secure and beautiful port of call, where we can celebrate in the way that only Greeks and Turks know how! . **KALO' MAS TAXI'DI LIPO'N!** (May we have a good trip!)