**NATO: BUILDING STABILITY IN AN UNPREDICTABLE WORLD**

Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen,

Welcome to our reception this evening, which I am hosting to mark the NATO Summit being held today and tomorrow at Celtic Manor in Newport, Wales. It is great to see so many representatives of NATO members and NATO partners here tonight.

The NATO Wales Summit is the largest gathering of its kind ever to take place in the UK. Heads of State and Government, senior ministers and Defence Chiefs from around 60 countries are attending. There are 2000 delegates, 2000 unaccredited delegates, 2000 contractors and 1500 members of the world's media.

This scale of effort is testimony to the scale of the challenges and threats that confront NATO today. Russia’s actions in the Crimea and Ukraine; instability in north Africa; conflict and civil war in the middle East. The world has become ever more unpredictable; building stability in this unpredictable world is NATO’s greatest challenge for a generation.

The Summit is our opportunity to show that NATO is strong and united, able to deter, meet and, if necessary, defeat any threat.

Our five goals for the Summit can be summed up very simply:

* First, we want to strengthen NATO’s ability to respond quickly to threats, through a dynamic and credible Readiness Action Plan, including an enhanced NATO Response Force.
* Secondly, as the ISAF mission in Afghanistan draws to an end, NATO must implement its commitment to train, advise, assist and financially support the Afghan National Security Forces.
* Thirdly, in a world of failed states, regional conflicts, terrorism and cyber-attacks, we want NATO members to increase their defence investments across the spectrum: towards the target of 2% of GDP, and allocating at least one-fifth of that expenditure to new equipment and research.
* Fourthly, we hope the Summit will agree to deepen NATO’s partnerships, through a new ‘interoperability initiative’, to develop skills and relationships between the alliance and 24 selected partners.
* Fifthly, we want all NATO members to recognise and publicly value the sacrifices made by the alliance’s armed forces, through a “North Atlantic Proclamation for the Armed Forces”.

We are confident that the Summit will be not just a great gathering of its members, but a great meeting of minds. The Summit is an opportunity for us all to respond decisively, credibly and cohesively to the threats we face together.

For my country, of course, the Summit is also an opportunity to show off the nation of Wales.

I hope you all enjoyed the brief video we have just played you.

Truly, Wales is a wonderful nation, with intensely beautiful landscapes and seascapes, with a rich history, a great culture and literature, a passion for song, for rugby and cricket. The great coal seams in the southern Welsh valleys were one of the two cradles of Britain’s industrial revolution. The country has a vibrant, modern commercial sector – from manufacturing to innovation, life sciences to cyber. It has excellent universities – popular among Greeks, and not only them.

We promised that you would taste tonight a flavour of Wales. My kitchen here has prepared all sorts of Welsh canapés and tit-bits for us tonight. All week long, [nine] of Greece’s most creative food-bloggers have been experimenting with Welsh recipes, coming up with Greek twists on Welsh themes, and blogging and tweeting about their results. All 9 bloggers are here tonight. I’d like to thank Sophie Athanasiadis and Dimitris Papazymouris from Cucina Caruso, Eleni Vonisakou from The Foodie Corner, Eleanna Giannopoulou from Foodaki, Eva Monochari from Funky Cook , Constantina Maragoudaki from SaborConna, Elena Sbokou from Elenaiscooking, Artemis Tsipi from Wonderfoodland and Athina Panou from Sugar Buzz for helping us showcase this aspect of Welsh life.

Wales has a great cultural tradition. The National Eisteddfod, held every year in Wales, is a wonderful festival of Welsh literature, music and performance, which has roots in mediaeval poetry and musical competitions. We’re going to hear tonight some short examples of Welsh poetry and Welsh song.

For the poetry, I’ve chosen examples by two unrelated twentieth-century poets called Thomas. R.S.Thomas was an Anglican priest, a strong Welsh nationalist, a tough and difficult man, with a poetic voice that could be harsh or lyrical, sometimes pastoral; often playing on metaphysical themes; strongly unsentimental about the tough nature of Welsh rural life. I’ve chosen a poem that I hope will resonate particularly with our Greek guests.

Dylan Thomas, by contrast, was a much more cosmopolitan poet, a journalist at home in London and New York. A great drinker. Sometimes violent, sometimes obscene. His poetry is modernist, but also romantic, deeply rooted in the culture of the industrialised Welsh valleys. A master of poetic form. The poem I have chosen is a great shaking of the fist at the power of death over us. [Our readers tonight are Mr Patrick Evans & Miss Adriana Evans . I’m very grateful to them.

Finally, it’s a great pleasure to welcome Melisma Ensemble with the mezzo soprano soloist Eleni Voudouraki. Wales is famous for its song: anyone who has heard a Welsh Male Voice Choir or the singing of the Welsh crowd at an international rugby match knows this well. Tonight, our [band and singers] are going to perform Beethoven’s arrangements of 4 Welsh songs, and we will close the formal part of the evening with ‘Land of my fathers’, often described as the Welsh national anthem.

I wish you all an enjoyable evening. “Diolch i chi” – thank you.