

***Honorable and Distinguished Guests,***

It is a great privilege for me and all my family members, to be the host of such eminent members of the Greek and Turkish media and other distinguished guests. We would like to present our cordial thanks for your coming and welcome to our home.

With this nice opportunity I would like to share shortly, some of my thoughts with you on current hot topics like Balkan Political Stability and Greek - Turkish joint collaboration possibilities.

***Distinguished Guests,***

We (I mean Greek and Turkish citizens) are proud to be living in the Balkans, which is a special geo-political region that never loses its importance in the scene of global politics. The special characteristic of the Balkans does not come from its geographical position alone. The region is very rich in terms of civilization, ethnicity and culture. In addition, the economical and political hinterland related with the region is very broad. Therefore the peace and stability in the Balkans is affecting the political and economical structure of the Mediterranean basin and most of Euro-Asia. It is because of these reasons that the Balkans have remained always important in history.

***Distinguished Guests,***

Many of the Balkan Nations have suffered the most in the last 15 years as a result of fundamental changes like the end of the cold war and the emergence of a global economy. Especially in the last decade, the people of some Balkan nations have lost their lives, their houses and their jobs. They were forced to leave their homelands as a result of the doings of other brother Balkan Nations with whom they had a long history of peaceful coexistence. Even though after considerable delay, for the first time in human history, transnational forces equipped with advanced technologies had to intervene in order to reinstate the peace in the region. The silence achieved as a result cost dearly to everybody involved. The region has not reached a state of recuperation yet. The forces that are threatening enduring peace today are weaker but still existing, as we see in Belgrad this week. Only mutual wealth and prosperity in the region can be a foundation for long-term stability. Therefore trade, industrial cooperation and joint investments are essential issues, for enduring peace in the region.

***Distinguished Guests,***

Greece and Turkey, are the most economically developed and politically stable among the Balkan countries. Between these two powers in the region, there have been some periods of disagreement and tension in history. However, since some time, the politicians of both countries have realized that most of these tensions and disagreements were fueled and exaggerated by shortsighted domestic politics without much real substance. Because of these, today we have many frozen unsolved issues which artificially keep us apart.

***Ladies and Gentlemen,***

But suddenly, as a result of recent events, I mean the earthquakes, have proven the strength of the desire in both countries to become more closer. Every body knows that earthquakes can collapse bridges. But we saw and learned all together, for the first time in the human history, earthquakes built a magnificent bridge between the two sides of the Egean Sea.

I believe, as one of the first Turkish businessman to start an investment in Greece, this bridge is solid and strong enough for accelerating the solutions for the frozen issues between our countries. Even though, so far there is not a lot of traffic on this bridge, I have no doubt very soon more bridges will be necessary. Therefore, while we are seeking solutions to old frozen issues, we should be creative enough to open the way for still existing feelings and memories that bring us closer.

Since it was the earthquake that started this period of mutual understanding, I propose to continue with a concrete project based on the earthquake risk that is threatening both our Nations. Therefore, our universities can join forces with projects related to earthquakes. I think the best foundation for a durable and strong bridge will be knowledge.

***Dear Guests,***

Tonight among my guests there are distinguished experts on Black Sea Economic Cooperation and European Union as well as experts on earthquakes. I hope during this dinner, many creative ideas on mutual cooperation will be developed among my Greek and Turkish guests. We will be very happy if some of my guests would like to share their ideas with us during the dessert and coffee period.

I am very confident that, strong cooperation between Greece and Turkey will not only speed up both country's development, but also will help significantly in healing the social and economic wounds in the Balkans.

With these thoughts and feelings, I would like to wish success to the **"Second Turkish – Greece Media Conference"**, and to express my thanks for your kind attention. Now it gives me great pleasure to toast for your honour and for successful collaboration between Greece and Turkey.