Dear Dr. Pfaltzgraff,
Distinguished Guests and Speakers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,

It gives me particular pleasure to be with you this morning and welcome you to the international conference convened by the Institute of Defense Analysis of Greece and the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, under the joint auspices of the Ministry of National Defense of Greece and NATO, with the help of the Karamanlis Foundation.

This is primarily because of the scope and ambition of the whole project that, while it was long in the making, it takes place today at a crucial moment for the Atlantic community and the Greek-American partnership.
The successful visit of the recently-elected President Obama to Europe holds the promise of renewal for our trans-Atlantic bonds, as both Europe and the United States are faced with common challenges that require coordination and cooperation at many fronts.

I am one of those who believe strongly that no other relationship matters more for world stability and prosperity than ours. This relationship has been successfully institutionalized through NATO but needs expanding beyond the realm of security to incorporate all the issues of significance our societies are concerned with.

Within this larger framework my country, Greece, by virtue of its geographical position and history, finds itself at the center of all major debates of our day, including enlarging, deepening and adapting our institutions to the changing times while confronting new threats coming from terrorism, ethno-religious extremism, organized crime, the proliferation of WMD and environmental degradation to name just a few.

Dear friends,

The United States and Greece share a strong commonality of values and interests. As the “strongest” and the “oldest” democracy in the world, we are both freedom-loving, independent-minded, entrepreneurial and mercantile peoples. It is no coincidence that your founding fathers were inspired by classical Hellas and ours by your revolution. The United States was among the first countries to recognize the independence of Greece after the breaking of our national revolution in 1821. Our two nations have fought side by side in all major conflicts that have shook and shaped the 20th century, including the First and Second World War, the Korean War, the Cold War and, today, our forces work together in fronts as far apart as those in Kosovo and Afghanistan.

Some cynics might be quick to point to what is often perceived as the anti-Americanism of many Greeks. I beg to differ: my view is that the strong feelings many of my compatriots feel about the United States prove the important role that the Greek-American relationship has played in shaping post-war Greece and its region and the continued strength of the bonds between our two nations.

Indeed, the United States provided both the security and the much needed financial and technological resources for Greece’s postwar spectacular development through the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. Obviously, one can point to unhappy episodes in this long history, but what counts and should not be underestimated is the fundamental strategic choice involved: if Greece is today a leader in Southeastern Europe thanks to its well-established democracy, prosperous economy and place at the center of the Euro-Atlantic institutions, it is, to a large extent, because of the Greek-American partnership.

Dear Friends,

This is a partnership that has evolved over time as Greece is no longer dependent on US aid but has become a donor country itself while welcoming hundreds of thousands of foreign immigrants and investing heavily abroad. It is the responsibility of today’s
leaders on both sides to cultivate, adapt and expand this partnership in the new times. For this reason, initiatives such as this conference are essential and much needed. It is here today where politicians and thinkers are brought together in a constructive trans-Atlantic dialogue to expand what unites us and confront, in order to bridge, what divides us.

I represent the foundation that is committed to the preservation and promotion of the legacy of Greece’s leading statesman, my uncle, Konstantinos Karamanlis. In his long political career Karamanlis had a chance to meet and build strong relations with many US Presidents. He firmly believed in the Western orientation of Greece and defended his policy even when many of his countrymen felt betrayed by the absence of Western solidarity against Turkish aggression.

He was, as we ourselves continue to be, enchanted by the dynamism and creativity of the American society. Nowhere is this creativity more pronounced than in America’s leading universities. I happen to know, because I, like so many of my fellow Greeks, studied here. And it is here, at the Fletcher School at Tufts University, that our foundation established a chair, where five eminent Greek scholars have so far taught, in memory of Karamanlis and for the promotion of the Greek-American partnership in higher education.

Thus, we at the Karamanlis Foundation remain committed to the deepening of the Greek-US relations and we lend our full support for initiatives such as this meeting today that promise to further enhance them.

I’d like to thank all the co-organizers for their superb work and for bringing all of us here today. I’d like in particular to thank all the speakers who agreed to share their experience and wisdom with us. In particular, I’d like to thank the minister of national defense of Greece, Mr. Evangelos Meimarakis, for honoring us by offering the key-note address during the dinner last night. I conclude by wishing you a very productive meeting. Thank you!