

Greece national day

Nations share tenacity, similar spirit of unwavering hospitality

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AMBASSADOR OF GREECE

Greece has been undergoing an important transformation during the last five years. Through extreme effort and economic sacrifices shared by all citizens, our country has achieved a fiscal adjustment that is unparalleled by the standards of any modern economy and it is gradually emerging from the economic difficulties it experienced. With renewed strength we move ahead toward creating a more vibrant and stable economy with equal burden sharing among all members of society. Our aim is to prosper, after having completed all the necessary structural reforms, within a stronger and more dynamic European Union.

We are deeply moved by Japan's efforts to heal the wounds caused by the Great East Japan



Earthquake. Greek people are especially sensitive to natural disasters, as our country has suffered considerable damage due to frequent seismic activity, which obliges us to always be prepared for emergency situations. Having experienced similar problems in recent years, we fully share the pain inflicted on the Japanese society by the irreplaceable loss of human lives, as well as the destruction of property. We are equally moved by the strong will and desire of all those who lost family members and friends in the disaster to rebuild their livelihoods and continue their activities.

From our countries' unflagging dedication to preserving our values, to our love for nature and the observance of certain rules and traditions, the parallels between Japan and Greece go far beyond our tenacity in hardships, reaching back millennia into the annals of history. In fact, much scholarship has been devoted to the similarities of our two countries' mythologies, particularly to the respective myths of Amaterasu and Demeter, at

once both the givers and takers of light and life. The richness of the polytheistic traditions of our seafaring, island nations has certainly informed the personalities and souls of our peoples, and the affinity that Greeks have for Japan, and vice-versa, is a testament to our ancient, and in some ways, strikingly similar histories.

Greece and Japan share other characteristics as well. Both countries are island nations. Local communities, through comparable economic and social conditions, developed distinct elements that make them so special today. Nature and climate obliged both peoples to exploit the sea and its resources, while modeling their lifestyles according to their maritime activities. Especially within the ancient Greek world the notion of using the sea to achieve security and prosperity became prominent and potent.

This notion evolved gradually to a great shipping tradition, which nowadays is more important than ever. Greek shipowners own around 18 percent of the world fleet. An important portion of the Greek-owned fleet is being built in Japanese shipyards, continuing a trend that started in the 1950s and considerably contributed to the efforts made by Japan to revitalize its economy after World War II. More than 100 vessels are currently being built in Japan with a value of at least \$8 billion.

Both our peoples share the notions of hospitality as embodied in the Greek philoxenia and the Japanese omotenashi, which have long shaped relations with outsiders, and today represent a concept that calls on all nations to come together in a spirit of respect, cooperation, and peace, an idea the ancient Greeks val-



"A Discus Thrower" (detail from a red-figured amphora) EMBASSY OF GREECE



Hydra, one of the Saronic Islands in the Aegean Sea, is a major tourist destination of Greece. EMBASSY OF GREECE



A view of the famed buildings on the Cycladic archipelago of Santorini EMBASSY OF GREECE

ued above all else. When Tokyo secured its Olympic bid, the Olympic ambassador, Christel Takigawa, invoked the concept of omotenashi in her speech to the IOC.

Japan is a country of countless marathon runners and Greece is the country that gave birth to this magnificent race, which so well symbolizes the ancient and modern spirit of endurance and personal self-improvement. Greece offers to the runners the same experience that Feidipidis felt some 2,500 years ago bringing the news of victory to Athens after the battle of Marathon.

As the summer tourist season approaches, Greece looks forward to providing unparalleled travel experiences to visitors from around the globe. Last year, more than 22 million travelers were drawn to the natural splendor of the Greek islands and the richness of our ancient culture. On offer are unique monument

sites, a thick calendar of cultural events, as well as a staggering array of recreational activities to suit any budget and taste, coupled with a dependable and safe infrastructure that meets the expectations of every visitor. Safety and quality are the two main advantages of traveling to Greece and taking part in its festival of sights, tastes and culture.

The unwavering goodwill and mutual respect between our countries and peoples serves both as a valuable beacon and an inspiration to us all. As Lafcadio Hearn once said, "In Japan, there is a certain joy, of which the Western world can show no parallel." It is our aspiration to feel this joy, making it a bridge that will bring our peoples closer.

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to the People of Greece

on Their Independence Day



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