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**Workshop on Transport Infrastructure Corridors along Europe and Asia**

**Monday, 4-9-17 (10.00-13.00/15.00-18.00)**

**(7 minutes)**

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Excellencies, Distinguished guests, Dear friends,

I feel very thrilled and deeply appreciative, but at the same time, loaded with great responsibility, to be here today and have the opportunity to be part of this meeting. A meeting, that gathers representatives of half countries of the world, to discuss and bring together ideas, on how unite effectively our world and get each other closer.

In my eyes, transports constitute, on the one hand the arteries of the world, which instead of blood, transfer the world's supplies and, on the other hand, transports are the links – the ambassadors of one region to another, of the countries and the continents among themselves.

In other words, transports are crucial factors for the inclusive growth and the sharing of goods, prosperity and ideas. In this light, transports perform an additional fundamental function: the accomplishment of harmony and smoothness in the sharing of goods and prosperity and, consequently, the security of fair international balance and social pacification.

All these considerations lead to the conclusion, that the exchange of supplies for everybody should be unimpeded and without constraints, so as to ensure, that the international balance and peace are not disrupted.

To achieve this, however, the creation of multimodal and alternative transports is indispensable. In that way, the establishment of diversified transport corridors, by type and territory, could give a boost for a more rationalized, beneficial and strengthened competition in the world economy.

All along, European area had a critical geopolitical role for the world's economy, commerce and the civilization. Especially the South-East part of Europe due to its proximity with East, Middle East Asia, Africa and Caucasian Area constitutes a transport and distributor hub.

The new European infrastructure policy has put in place a powerful European transport network across 28 Member States, connected to neighboring countries and the rest of the world, to promote growth and competitiveness. The multimodal TEN-T Core Network, with the Core Network Corridors, to be completed by 2030, by linking more than 80 European ports and almost 40 airports of big cities, will strongly contribute to European cohesion and strengthen the world market.

In this frame Greece has set as a priority the efficient and cost effective multimodal transportation of people and goods. Large volumes of traffic, passengers and cargo are being served through the infrastructure networks, including important hubs, such as Thessaloniki and Alexandroupoli Ports, that are connected by Egnatia Road and vertically with the corridors ..... and .....

This Workshop today highlights a vision of connectivity, cooperation and dialogue across Europe and Asia, given that in the maritime system of entrance-exit and towards the European SouthEast Area there are today two alternative routes: the one through Souez and the other one through Bosphorus.

However, the constantly noted delays during the vessels' passage through Bosphorus and the need for alternative water transport corridors to and from the Black Sea and the Central Europe, with at the same time, **direct waterway out** (meaning low – cost) of Central and North Europe towards Eastern Mediterranean, make **the need for a radical proposal more than ever imperative:**

In particular, I urge for the development of a connection of Danube river with Morava river of Serbia, and its connection, then, with Axios river of FYROM and Greece, with an ending to the Mediterranean Sea in the port of Thessaloniki.

The idea for this river freight highway is rather old and stems before the First World War. It is indeed a very ambitious, but at the same time, absolutely essential proposal! For its implementation, the following infrastructure work should follow:

- i. deepening and widening of Axios river, inside the Greek territory, of about 75 km
- ii. deepening and widening of Axios river, inside the territory of FYROM, of about 200 km
- iii. deepening and widening of Morava river, inside the territory of Serbia with an ending up in Danube river, of about 346 km.

At the same time, waterway channels should be constructed, avoiding the cities of Krayevo, Nis and FYROM, meeting the best environmental practices and complying with the European and International regulatory framework. The aim of this project is the environmental balance not to be disrupted. On the contrary, great benefits will result for the agriculture through the realization of irrigation works, and for the green energy, through the construction of hydroelectric plants.

However, such a strategic priority transport project for the World trade, requires the invaluable contribution of all the involved geopolitical stakeholders. Otherwise, the economic success of this endeavor and the geopolitical balance and stability cannot be ensured.

The aforementioned goals could be achieved by the establishment of an ad hoc body, which would manage the construction work, would submit funding proposals to financial institutions of different origins for a sufficient financial coverage of the financial commitments of this body.

I think, we will all agree, that the above endeavor is significantly ambitious. But, without ambitions, no progress would have ever been made, regardless of how many years would have passed.

It is worth hoping for. It is worth trying for a better future, a future with prosperity, balance and peace for everybody.

Thank you for your kind attention.