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President Barack Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the nationwide membership of the American Hellenic Institute (AHI), I write to raise several items for your consideration as you prepare for your upcoming visit to Greece on November 15, 2016.

First, I would also like to express our appreciation for the multiple ways your administration has supported our valued NATO member Greece through its ongoing debt crisis. In July, AHI applauded the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) for an AHI-backed policy shift that authorized OPIC to do business in Greece if there are "strong development or foreign policy reasons to proceed." This clear statement of Greece's eligibility for assistance from OPIC is appreciated. As Greece continues to follow through with its obligations to its creditors, we hope more tangible actions will be taken by the United States to support one of its most valuable and faithful allies, Greece. Additionally, AHI appreciates your administration's engagement on this critical issue, most notably, the efforts of Treasury Secretary Jack Lew, who visited Greece in July. Secretary Lew has made the case for debt relief for Greece, noting Greece's geopolitical significance. As your travel itinerary includes a visit to Germany to meet with Chancellor Angela Merkel, and a final meeting with your "Quint" counterparts, we request the agenda to include the case for Greek debt relief. The request will reinforce Secretary Lew's call for debt relief and your recent critique of how austerity measures have slowed European growth. The IMF and other international financial institutions, economists, and the *New York Times* Editorial Board have proclaimed debt relief is imperative as Greece's debt is not sustainable.

Moreover, Greece has done its utmost to manage an extraordinary refugee crisis with limited and strained resources amid its economic crisis. In 2015, more than 850,000 migrants arrived by sea to Greece. In 2016, the EU-Turkey agreement has led to a significant reduction in arrivals of migrants by sea to Greece, totaling nearly 170,000. However, approximately 60,000 migrants remain in Greece. The United States must ensure the agreement is respected. Therefore, your visit during such a critical time further underscores the importance for U.S. involvement in the region and sends a strong message of support as Greece endures two crises. Here, again, AHI appreciates the administration's commitment to humanitarian aid, providing \$24 million to UNHCR for the refugee emergency in Europe which includes its operations in Greece.

In promoting a multilateral approach to diplomacy and foreign policy, the U.S. should consider Greece an immensely valuable link in this region. With its centuries-long enduring presence, its close cultural, political and economic ties to the Mediterranean countries, Western Europe, the Balkans, Eastern Europe and the Middle East, Greece remains an ideal strategic partner for the U.S. In addition, the projection of U.S. interests there depends heavily on the region's stability. Therefore, the U.S. has

a stake in fostering good relations between NATO allies in the region. Mr. President, your visit to Greece provides an opportunity to highlight key policy positions on Greece's sovereignty in the Aegean Sea and respect for the Treaty of Lausanne both of which are in the best interests of the United States.

- The visit offers a golden opportunity to stand by Greece, which must expend financial resources to defend its sovereignty—upwards of \$400 million a year—during an economic crisis from which it is in the best interest of the United States for Greece to emerge.

Despite its economic difficulties, Greece continues to be of vital importance for the projection of U.S. strategic interests by its geographic location and its strong, unwavering support for NATO. As home to the most important naval presence in the Mediterranean Sea, NSA Souda Bay, Crete, Greece has been critical to the delivery of U.S. troops, cargo, and supplies, providing access and extending the U.S. and NATO's reach into the Middle East and North Africa. To illustrate, in 2015, more than 70 U.S. Navy and NATO ships and vessels visited Souda Bay and more than 2,830 U.S. Air Force and NATO planes utilized the 115th Combat Wing on Crete. Also, more than 65 U.S. ships and more than 1,200 trainees utilized NMIOTC. In addition, Greece is a top contributor to the defense efforts of NATO, spending an estimated 2.38% of its GDP on defense. Greece is second behind only the United States in this regard.

Mr. President, AHI's perspective on your upcoming visit to Greece is embodied within the fundamental principles of democracy, is founded on the rule of law, and is based on what is in the best interests of the United States. We appreciate the opportunity to bring our perspective to your attention, and furthermore, reiterate AHI's gratitude for the administration's high-level engagement with Greece.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Nick Larigakis
President

CC: Joe Biden, Vice President of the United States
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