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The Honorable
Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madame Secretary:

On behalf of the nationwide membership of the American Hellenic Institute (AHI), I am writing to raise a number of issues for your consideration as you prepare for your upcoming visit to Greece and Turkey.

The core issues of concern to the Greek American community are all based within the universally accepted principles of the rule of law and international law, including U.S. laws. Our positions support of the best interests of the United States.

Obstacles to U. S. Interests in Southeast Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean

The projection of U.S. interests in southeast Europe and the eastern Mediterranean depend heavily on the region's stability. Therefore, the United States has an important stake in fostering good relations between two NATO allies, Greece and Turkey, and in achieving a just and viable settlement of the Cyprus problem.

However, Turkey's continuing occupation of Cyprus, its intransigence in solving the Cyprus problem, its refusal to recognize the Republic of Cyprus and its veto to the accession of Cyprus to international organizations, its continuing violations of Greece's territorial waters and airspace, and continuing religious and human rights violations in Turkey, prevents this stability and damages U.S. interests.

Of further concern to region's stability is the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), which through its intransigence and highly provocative actions toward Greece, is preventing the resolution of the name issue dispute between the two countries.

Greece: NATO Ally, Strategic Partner

Greece is of vital importance for the projection of U.S. strategic interests in the region by virtue of its geographic location. To the north of Greece are the Balkans, Eastern Europe and Russia, to the East the Middle East, and to the South are North Africa and the Suez Canal.

Moreover, significant communication links for commerce and energy sources pass through the region. As a result, Greece is by far the most economically and politically stable country in the Balkans. It has helped the U.S. to bring political stability and economic development to this volatile region, having invested over \$22 billion in the countries of the region, thereby creating over 200,000 new jobs and contributing over \$750 million in development aid.

In the past week, we witnessed Greece demonstrating its value to the United States' crucial ally in the Middle East, Israel, by thwarting the international flotilla to Gaza.

Greece is also home to the most important naval presence in the Mediterranean Sea, NSA Souda Bay, in Crete. There are numerous annual visits by U.S. military ships and planes to Souda Bay and its adjacent air base. Souda Bay has been critical to the delivery of U.S. troops, cargo, and supplies to Afghanistan, and most recently, NATO operations in Libya.

On March 19, 2009, at a rollout ceremony to unveil the delivery to the Greek Air Force of the "F-16 Peace Xenia IV" in Fort Worth, Texas, Bruce S. Lemkin, Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force, stated:

"From World War II and the Cold War through today, Greece had remained a stalwart NATO ally and friend. [Since 9/11] Greece [has] provided strong political support, the use of Greek airspace, and offered Greek military assets to combat terrorism, including the deployment of a Greek frigate to the Arabian Sea for almost two years!...Greece has been resolute in its support of operations in the struggles against terrorism and extremism, through the vitally important use of Souda Bay Air Field as landing base, unrestricted over-flights, and providing a continuous rotation of personnel to Afghanistan since 2002."

On March 9, 2010, during a White House event honoring Greek Independence Day, President Barack Obama said:

"...let me acknowledge Greece's efforts to extend the security and stability in our time—toward a just and final settlement in Cyprus, fully integrating the Balkans in Europe, and the Prime Minister's [Greek Premier George Papandreou] personal work to improve relations with Turkey. We thank you for your leadership. And let me commend Greece, our close NATO ally, for standing up for the security and opportunity of people around the world—from the

Balkans to Afghanistan, where Greek service members are helping to give people who have know[n] too much war the chance to live in peace and security.”

Moreover, on March 25, 2011, President Obama re-affirmed Greece’s contributions as a NATO ally, including in support of NATO’s most recent operations in Libya:

“And as we celebrate the independence of the Greek people, the United States and Greece are standing with our NATO allies to support the Libyan people as they stand up for their own freedom.”

In the NATO buildup for Libya, Souda Bay spokesperson Paul Farley said of the 400 U.S. Marines deployed there that they were “part of contingency planning to provide the president [Barack Obama] flexibility on full range of option regarding Libya” along with the amphibious assault ships USS Kearsarge and USS Ponce.¹

In addition, Greece is a top contributor to the defense efforts of NATO, spending an estimated 2.2% of its GDP on defense, and is also an active participant in peacekeeping and peace-building operations conducted by international organizations, including the UN, NATO, the EU, and OSCE.

It is important to note, that unlike Turkey, Greece has never asked for any financial assistance from the United States in return for lending its support and cooperation.

Therefore, when promoting a multilateral approach to diplomacy and foreign policy, the U.S should look to Greece as an immensely valuable link in this region. With its close cultural, political and economic ties to the Mediterranean countries, Western Europe, the Balkans, Eastern Europe and the Middle East, Greece is an ideal strategic partner for the U.S.—not just in the present—but for the *future*.

The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) – Name Recognition Issue

As demonstrated, Greece is by far the strategic key for the United States in the Balkans and the most economic and politically stable country in the Balkans. By contrast, FYROM is of little or no strategic significance to the national security interests of the United States. However, the continuing intransigent and provocative actions by the FYROM government against its neighbor, Greece, poses a potential threat to stability in the Balkans and to the detriment of U.S. interests.

At the same time, it seems that it has been the U.S.’s policy to take Greece for granted over the years. The sensitivities and concerns of our most important ally in the Balkans, and one of our most loyal and long-time allies, have not always been considered. Successive administrations have looked upon Greece as a Western nation and an ally that will not rock the boat and will follow what the United States and the major NATO nation’s desire. This policy has been unfortunate and has created unnecessary problems -- such as the FYROM name issue.

¹ “U.S. troops arrive in Greece in Libya buildup,” *USA Today* as reported by the *Associated Press*, March 3, 2011.

Greece has made a major compromise by proposing “a compound name for the country; a name that will distinguish it from both the Greek and Bulgarian part.” Greece’s position is unambiguous. It has gone the extra mile. It wants a negotiated, mutually acceptable solution that will be valid internationally, in accordance with the U.N. Security Council resolutions. This is a serious shift of tremendous importance from Greece’s initial position. Unfortunately, this gesture was not reciprocated by FYROM. The time is now for FYROM to demonstrate the maturity and the responsibility that a state needs in order to become a member of NATO and the European Union, two alliances she aspires to join.

The United States can easily turn the situation around by informing FYROM that it supports the Greek government’s major compromise of accepting “a compound name for their country, a name that will distinguish it from both the Greek and Bulgarian” part. The immediate settlement of the name issue in a way that is acceptable to Greece will allow the United States’ strongest ally in the Balkans to be the driving force for FYROM’s membership to NATO and ultimately to the European Union. FYROM’s “passport” to NATO and the European Union is Greece. In addition, Greece is the biggest investor in FYROM and literally helps to sustain FYROM’s precarious economy and reduce its large unemployment. Greece is also a leader in investment and economic development in southeastern Europe with over \$22 billion invested.

FYROM is the intransigent party and not Greece in this process. FYROM must realize that in order to join NATO, it must focus on the fulfillment of NATO’s good neighborly relations principle and the immediate settlement of the difference over the name issue. Instead it continues to provoke Greece and refuses to negotiate in good faith over the name issue, especially since Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski came to power in August 2006. He has followed a long-term policy of extreme nationalism and provocation against Greece in a manner which is totally inconsistent with European values. For example, acts of provocation have included:

- the distortion of geographic maps,
- the naming its airport “Alexander the Great,”
- the publication of revisionist textbooks in schools,
- inflammatory comments by top government officials, and most recently,
- the erection of a 55 meter statue of what is perceived to be “Alexander the Great” on a horse, in Skopje’s main square.

All of these acts encourage new generations in FYROM to cultivate hostile sentiments against Greece. They furthermore breach essential provisions of the Interim Accord and undermine the efforts to build a climate of trust, cooperation and good neighborly relations.

We contend this continuing systematic government policy will hinder FYROM’s accession to both the EU and NATO. This is the real threat to stability in the Balkans.

In our view, and in the view of many others, U.S. actions since 1992 regarding the FYROM name dispute have constituted an American foreign policy blunder that has damaged U.S. interests in the Western Balkans and harmed Greece, our key ally in the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean, for no sound reason.

President Obama, while in the Senate, was one of three original lead co-sponsors of Senate Resolution 300, which urged that the FYROM work with Greece within the framework of the United Nations process to reach a mutually acceptable official name for that country and achieve longstanding U.S. and U.N. policy goals.

In a statement that his campaign released to the Greek American community in October 2008, he stated:

“...[I] support the UN-led negotiations and believe that there can and should be an agreement between Skopje and Athens on a mutually-acceptable name that leads to greater stability in the Balkans.”

Therefore, during your visit to Athens, we ask that you issue a statement that would send a clear message to FYROM that the United States wants this matter resolved as soon as possible and that FYROM:

- Needs to negotiate in good faith with Greece to resolve the name issue and to cease immediately their irredentist propaganda against Greece, propaganda which violates the UN-brokered Interim Accord, as stated in Article 7 paragraph 1 of the Accord, signed in New York on September 13 1995 between FYROM and Greece.

A name that satisfies both countries and the immediate halting of all provocative actions against Greece will satisfy the interests of all the parties.

Turkey's Violations of the Rule of Law

Cyprus Invasion and Occupation

Cyprus is an important nation for U.S. interests in the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, and it is a key partner on counter-terrorism and security issues. Cyprus shares the U.S.' core values of freedom, democracy and adherence to the rule of law. It is also a member of the EU, and the first EU nation to sign the U.S.' Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). Cyprus is a Western-oriented country and it is vital to U.S. interests that it remains so.

July 20, 2011 will mark the 37th anniversary of Turkey's illegal invasion and occupation of 37 percent of the Republic of Cyprus in violation of the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, the UN Charter article 2 (4), the preamble and article 1 of the NATO Treaty, and customary international law. Today, Turkey contributes more than \$350 million annually in direct economic support to the regime in the occupied part of Cyprus, and it is estimated that the total cost to Turkey of its illegal occupation amounts to \$1 billion annually. This is money that can serve a more useful purpose in our fight in the war against terrorism, such as Afghanistan.

September 3, 2008 brought a renewed round of negotiations on Cyprus. Unfortunately, nearly three years later, the talks are at a stalemate between President Demetrios Christofias and the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mr. Dervis Eroglu. The stalemate is due to Mr. Eroglu's hardline positions. However, it is also due to Mr. Eroglu's inability to negotiate freely on behalf of the

Turkish Cypriots because he is subject to external pressures from Turkey, which do not provide and chance for progress to be made. The Cypriots themselves should have ownership of the settlement process and the solution should be by the Cypriot people for the Cypriot people.

In October of 2008, in a campaign statement released to the Greek American community, President Obama stated:

“As president, [I] will show U.S. leadership in seeking to negotiate a political settlement on Cyprus. [I] believe strongly that Cyprus remain a single, sovereign country...within a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation...A negotiated political settlement on Cyprus would end the Turkish occupation of northern Cyprus and repair the island’s tragic division while paving the way to prosperity and peace throughout the entire region.”

We support a settlement of the Cyprus problem through negotiations based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation in a state with a single sovereignty and international personality, incorporating the norms of a constitutional democracy embracing key American principles, the EU *acquis communautaire*, U.N. resolutions on Cyprus, the pertinent decisions of the European Court of Human Rights and of other European Courts--as in the best interests of the United States.

Secretary Clinton, we call upon you to ask Turkey to:

- demilitarize Cyprus now;
- withdraw its 43,000 occupation troops illegally in Cyprus (Turkey’s troops can be more useful if deployed in Afghanistan);
- return to Turkey the 180,000 illegal settlers/colonists from Turkey in violation of the Geneva Convention of 1949;
- tear down the green line barbed-wire fence across the face of Cyprus which, together with Turkey’s 43,000 occupation forces, is the real cause of the alleged isolation of the Turkish Cypriots in the occupied northern part of Cyprus; and
- warn Turkish leaders not to manipulate the current talks or restrict Mr. Eroglu at the bargaining table.

Advancing these positions will underscore support for the rule of law and respect for international law. It will demonstrate that the United States is serious about fostering a solution to the near 37-year-old Cyprus problem.

The U.S can play a crucial role by getting realistic with Turkey and eliminating its double-standard policy that has rewarded Turkish aggression and ignored countless violations of the rule of law in Cyprus—a valued ally of the U.S. on counter-terrorism and security issues in the Eastern Mediterranean. It does not serve the United States’ best interest to continue with failed policies and the appeasement of Turkey.

Suppression of Religious Freedom, Violations of Minority Communities

In his 2008 campaign statement released to the Greek American community, President Obama stated:

“[He was] one of 73 Senators who signed a letter to President Bush in 2006 urging him to press Turkey to restore the full rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Orthodox Christian Church in Istanbul. [And that he had sent] Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice a personal letter on the same matter. [He called on] Turkey to respect the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s rights and freedoms, including its property rights. Turkey should allow the reopening of the Patriarchate’s school of theology on Halki Island and guarantee the right to train clergy of all nationalities, not just Turkish nationals.”

We commend the Obama Administration for demonstrating support for the Ecumenical Patriarchate. However, the Turkish government continues to tolerate assaults against its Greek Orthodox Christian religious minority and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and it continues the illegal closure of the Greek Orthodox Halki Patriarchal School of Theology. These actions violate U.S. principles on freedom of religion and U.S. law as expressed in Section 2804 of the Omnibus Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act of 1998 (PL 105-277). The law states that the United States should use its influence with the Government of Turkey to suggest that the Government of Turkey:

- recognize the Ecumenical Patriarchate and its nonpolitical religious mission;
- ensure the continued maintenance of the institution’s physical security needs, as provided for under Turkish and international law, including the Treaty of Lausanne, the 1968 Protocol, the Helsinki Final Act (1975) and the Charter of Paris;
- provide for the proper protection and safety of the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Patriarchate personnel; and
- reopen the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s Halki Patriarchal School of Theology.”

We condemn Turkey’s toleration of assaults against its Greek Orthodox Christian minority, the limited progress so far on the protection of the human and minority rights of the non-Muslim communities in Turkey, its continuing illegal closure of the Greek Orthodox Halki Patriarchal School of Theology and its illegal seizure of property of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Greek Orthodox Christian minority of Istanbul, Imbros and Tenedos.

Under the International Religious Freedom Act (IFRA) of 1998, the president of the United States is obligated to oppose violations of religious freedom in any country whose government “engages in or tolerates violations of religious freedom and promote the right to religious freedom in that country.” The Act further obligates the president to take one or more of 15 enumerated actions with respect to any such country.

We call on you, Madame Secretary, to express to Turkey through any diplomatic means, that is obligated to:

- recognize the international legal personality of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and its nonpolitical religious mission;
- ensure the continued maintenance and security of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and its personnel and the safety of the Ecumenical Patriarch as required under all applicable treaties; and
- remove all legal obstacles to the functioning of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Halki Patriarchal School of Theology.

The United States should not tolerate such violations from an ally, and we should call on Turkey to immediately implement and enforce strictly the guarantees of religious freedom and human and minority rights set forth in the Treaty of Lausanne, the UN Charter, other international agreements, and U.S. laws.

Secretary Clinton, we urge you to visit the Ecumenical Patriarchate in order to show your support for this Holy See and to send a strong message to the Turkish government that the United States will not tolerate future violations against the Ecumenical Patriarchate. This sentiment can be underscored by issuing a joint communiqué with His All Holiness Bartholomew I.

Violations of Greece's Sovereignty in the Aegean Sea

Turkey has made an outrageous claim to one-half of the Aegean Sea in total disregard of all the relevant international treaties and agreements in force, has engaged in provocative activities in the Aegean and does not agree to the referral to the International Court of Justice of the issue of the delimitation of the continental shelf. Despite the opening of accession negotiations with the EU and Greece's sincere efforts to achieve complete normalization in relations with Turkey, the latter continues to threaten Greece with war (casus belli) and promotes claims that are unfounded and devoid of any legal basis.

Because Turkey aspires to become a full member state of the EU she should be more respectful of international law and the commitments she has undertaken in the context of the EU accession process, including the full respect for the principle of good neighborly relations.

Madame Secretary, the situation in the Aegean has become acute and has the potential to trigger a flash point that would be detrimental to the stability of the region. In fact, it has risen to the point where Prime Minister George Papandreou felt compelled to raise violations by Turkish jets of Greek airspace before a public audience that included Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Turkish ambassadors at Erzurum, Turkey on January 7, 2011. Just two days prior, eight Turkish planes flew over a Greek island, prompting Papandreou to threaten a pull-out of this event.

Therefore, we call on you, to impress upon Turkey to:

- adhere to international law and legal procedures with respect to any dispute it has with Greece in the Aegean Sea; and
- immediately abandon its provocative actions in its violations of Greek territorial waters and airspace.

Our Positions Are Founded in the Rule of Law

The issues presented above and the recommendations offered for their successful resolution are all embodied within the fundamental principles of democracy and are founded on the rule of law and what is in the best interests of the United States.

I appreciate the opportunity to bring these issues to your attention and thank you for your consideration of them.

Sincerely,



Nick Larigakis
President

cc: Vice President Joe Biden
Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia Phil H. Gordon
U.S. Ambassador to Greece Daniel B. Smith
U.S. Ambassador to Turkey Francis J. Ricciardone
U.S. Ambassador to Cyprus Frank C. Urbancic
Department of State Senior Turkey Desk Officer Meghan Gregonis
Department of State Senior Greece Desk Officer Christopher Snipes
The Congress