

Remarks delivered by SNF Co-President Andreas Dracopoulos upon receiving an honorary doctorate from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and accepting the title of Grand Benefactor on behalf of SNF

I stand here today with a special sense of honor, pride, and emotion. I am here representing my great-uncle, the late Stavros S. Niarchos, thanks to whom SNF has been, and continues to be, able to contribute to society as a whole over the years. I am here representing all of my colleagues at SNF and our more than 3,000 grantees, with whom we have shared this common vision and this journey toward our own Ithaca; a journey that continues with the aim of contributing together and individually—to the extent of our individual abilities and capabilities—in order to make our world even a little bit better, with the greatest possible impact on the daily life of each of our fellow human beings, whoever they are, wherever they reside, wherever they come from—and wherever they are heading.

We are truly proud of our work over the past 28 years, since 1996 when our founder, Stavros S. Niarchos, passed away and SNF was born. We have been active in more than 130 countries around the world, where we have contributed over \$3.7 billion in the areas of Social Welfare, Health & Sports, Arts & Culture, and Education. At the same time we have contributed, we have also benefited from countless hours of human collaboration, always with a focus on empowering humanity.

For many diverse and understandable reasons, Greece has remained at the center of our activities over the years, with almost 2,500 grants. Following the handover of the SNFCC to the people of Greece in 2017, we focused our attention even more on health.

An effort—the Global Health Initiative (GHI)—that started from Evangelismos Hospital, evolved within and outside the borders, and is now concentrated on the three major new public hospitals (in Komotini, Thessaloniki, and Sparta), which will be delivered to the Greek public within the next two to three years, on outfitting them, and, perhaps most importantly, on training and education programs in nursing, trauma, hospital infections, and generally on an effort to strengthen human resources in the health sector. This effort is valued at over \$1 billion in financial terms, but first and foremost it is an effort that has respect for our fellow human beings as its starting point and whose mission is to increase access to quality health care for all, as well as to empower frontline health care professionals. At this point, I would like to thank our three advisors and close collaborators in the GHI: Drs. Charalambos Roussos, Spiros Pnevmatikos, and Panagiotis Koulouvaris, all of them members of the wider NKUA community. Earlier, we watched the overview video on our Foundation's support to the University of Athens. Our support runs both long and deep, with our first grant dating back to 1997, 27 years ago, covering a wide range of areas and departments, from sciences and humanities to, of course, health sciences, totaling over €16 million. And, our support actively continues to this day, through the GHI, the Foundation's largest-ever initiative, which I mentioned earlier.

At this point, we would like to congratulate NKUA for the excellent news that we have just recently found out about, as according to the QS World University Ranking of June 2024, NKUA was awarded a Certificate of Recognition as the Most Improved University in the “Europe Award” category for the academic year 2024-2025. Furthermore, according to the University Impact Rankings, the University of Athens is ranked 6th in the world in “Quality Education.” At the same time, the NKUA School of Medicine is ranked among the top 100 medical schools worldwide in the Shanghai Ranking's Global Ranking of Academic Subjects in the field of Clinical Medicine. Our sincerest congratulations!

You may have noticed that the protagonists of the video were all young people. To a large extent, they are also the protagonists of our wider mission. Investing in a historically important university, such as the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, is fundamentally an investment in young people, in their spirits, their minds, their potential, their prospects, their future—and at the same time an investment in the future of the country. It is these young people who will be the educators of tomorrow who will teach the next generations, the doctors and nurses who will care for the sick, the economists, biologists, and professionals who will form the backbone of society. Therefore, we feel a particular sense of excitement but also of responsibility to contribute, as much as we can, to the important work of the University of Athens. And we hope that this remarkable educational institution, with the necessary

support from all of us, living up to its history and fulfilling its mission, will continue to evolve and take constant steps forward.

One of the first people to ever receive an honorary degree from the University of Athens was US President and Nobel Laureate Woodrow Wilson, and I can't help but remember his words: "*Our civilization cannot survive materially unless it is redeemed spiritually.*" 100 years later, his words remain more relevant than ever.

These are difficult times. There is a sense that our very own humanity is being commodified. Important decisions must be made while we are at a complex crossroads. In many cases worldwide, there is a lack of leadership and a lack of ethics. The challenges are difficult; our mental health is being damaged; apathy is plaguing us; sometimes the stress of everyday life overwhelms any hope that seems to exist. We are faced with a call for humanity and civic engagement. Each in our own way, we are all called upon to contribute and to work together for a better tomorrow, for all.

At this point, I would like to stress the importance of the elections that took place in Europe, where for the first time in a long time we have seen a very significant increase in participation. It is a very important moment, as there is no greater tool in democracy than our vote. Sometimes we take it for granted and forget its importance.

Only through a healthy society can extremes be avoided. We can no longer afford to wait. Apathy is not an option that can bring solutions.

In closing, I want to share with you two quotes that I try to live by every day. The first is from American psychiatrist and author Theodore Isaac Rubin, who said, "Kindness is more important than wisdom, and the recognition of this is the beginning of wisdom." Rubin lived to be over 100, so he would know what wisdom is.

The second is from our own Emmanuel Kriaras, recipient of an honorary doctorate from NKUA in 1997, who said in an interview a few years before he died in 2014 at the age of 107 that "Love is the pursuit of the ideal, in all its manifestations," and that "Love is the antidote to death. It is perhaps life itself. You only live when you're in love." Especially those of you who are young and have your life ahead of you: never stop striving and living for your ideals, never stop being in love!

Thank you very much!