

Mr. IOANNIS CHATZITHEODOSIOU, PRESIDENT OF ATHENS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Your Excellency Minister of Development and Investment, Mr. Adonis Georgiadis, Honorable Mr. Liu Xiaonan, General Manager of the Department of Foreign Funds and Overseas Investment of NDRC, Honorary Ambassador of China, Mrs. Zhang Qiye, Honorable Ambassador of Greece in China, Mr. Iliopoulos, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure and special honor for the Athens Chamber of Commerce to participate in such a special event.

And I am very glad that among the participants is the Minister of Development and Investment Mr. Adonis Georgiadis, with whom we not only work extremely well to support entrepreneurship in Greece, but I know very well how hard he works to attract investment in the Greek economy. And China is an extremely interesting case for potential investors.

That is why the Athens Chamber of Commerce, the largest chamber in Greece with more than 150,000 members, has worked systematically to highlight the country's investment prospects and the opportunities that exist for Greek companies, through possible collaborations with corresponding Chinese.

However, I will start by mentioning the special ties that our Chamber has built with China in recent years.

First of all, we are the Chamber with almost 1000 Chinese members, local companies that belong to Chinese citizens.

Our special relationship with China has been going on for some years.

It is characteristic that our Chamber started its action for extroversion in 2016 with its cooperation with ALIBABA.

It was the year we organized with the e-commerce giant, the largest ALIBABA event in the world, with more than 650 companies monitoring ALIBABA executives for 6 hours to analyze collaboration opportunities.

We organized a meeting between then- Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and ALIBABA founder Jack Ma in July 2016 in Shanghai.

We visited China repeatedly and promoted Greek-Chinese business relations.

In 2019 we had the great honor to be the representative of Greece in the initiative of the Government of China "Chambers 17 + 1", i.e. the initiative that includes Chambers from 17 countries of Central and Eastern Europe. An initiative accompanying the corresponding at the level of Heads of State.

And very recently we had the great honor of being awarded in China during the Conference on International Chambers and Associations. We were awarded for our contribution to the development of bilateral relations and for the promotion of the Silk Road.

So you see that we have developed intense activity with the Chinese side and this choice of ours is not accidental.

We know very well that the two countries have historical ties that connect them and how much they have contributed to culture. China in the East and Greece in the West.

We have a history of thousands of years and there is a great deal of respect between the peoples of the two countries.

But in addition to the past that connects us, we can create a bright future, with mutually beneficial agreements.

At the moment, Greece can welcome a lot of Chinese investment and it will be in the benefit of both sides, for Chinese companies to invest in Greece.

Respectively, China, this huge market, can receive many imports from Greece. What we need - and we are asking for as a Chamber - is for the Chinese government to support with all the necessary actions the promotion of Greek products in order to reach the Chinese consumer. We need to be clear. If the Chinese government wishes, many Greek business ventures will benefit by promoting their products to this huge market.

It is also possible to have many bilateral agreements in various fields, such as tourism, energy, high technology, industry. In any case, there is good ground for win-win business synergies, which will help Chinese entrepreneurship enter Europe even more strongly through Greece, as the entrance gate for Europe, but also Greek companies to conclude agreements that will give growth prospects to themselves and consequently in the Greek economy.

This is our first concern as a Chamber and I hope to see such efforts soon for the benefit of both Greece and China.

Thank you very much and I wish you every success in today's event.