



## **Opening remarks**

**Panayotis Thomopoulos**

**Chairman of National Bank of Greece & Vice Chairman of the Board of IOBE**

### **2017 Korean-Hellenic Maritime Cooperation Forum**

**Athens, 1 June 2016**

Mrs Minister & Dear Ambassador,

Welcome to the 2017 Korean-Hellenic Cooperation Forum, organised by the Embassy of the Republic of Korea and the Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research (IOBE). This is the third event that IOBE is organising on the potential for cooperation between Greece and Korea. We believe that the commercial ties between the two countries can be strengthened further and that the two countries can learn a lot from each other's experience.

The long and illustrious history of Korea and of Greece had many parallels. Their big neighbors that occupied them for long or short periods never conquered the hearts and minds of their populations, so there has been a continuity over the centuries: the historical heritage was preserved. They also both suffered enormously during the Second World War that in effect in Greece lasted until the end of Civil War in 1949 and in Korea until 1953. And one has to remind to the younger generations, that tend to forget the past, the admirable history of the Republic of Korea since 1953. After the ashes of the destructive Korean War, your ancient country thanks to the aid of allies but basically the work effort of its population was again resurrected, becoming gradually a world industrial leader and a democracy that many envy. I think that you will continue playing a leading role not only in the wider region, but also worldwide in many fields and not only in the industrial and high technology but also in the cultural field and your economic and social progress should be a template for other countries in Asia.



The Republic of Korea is one of the most advanced economies in the world. Despite some interruptions, we also experienced a dictatorship, the Republic of Korea followed an Inclusive Growth model, so that in parallel with the big industrial successes the independent Institutions have also been strengthened so that there are checks and balances that have consolidated democracy and social cohesion. The benefits of growth are diffused to the whole population. The Republic has achieved an astonishing progress in the fields of technology, innovation and education, thus, succeeding in being very well positioned to face the challenges that the future will bring. That is why we believe that Greece can benefit significantly from the exchange not only of goods, but also of ideas, with the Republic of Korea.

The objective of this forum is to highlight promising areas of further cooperation between Korea and Greece: e-Government, e-Taxation system and tax evasion prevention measures, e-Transportation project, waste management policy, and smart grids. In this forum, highly qualified experts and business people from Korea and Greece will share their expertise and experience.

We believe that this forum will be an important step towards consolidating tangible cooperation between our two countries so that our political, economic, social and cultural ties can be further strengthened.