

## **ALBANIA IN THE NEXT TEN YEARS-ENVISIONING THE FUTURE**

**International Symposium, (Tirana , 29-30 March 2012)**

**Remarks by Ambassador (ad.hon.) Alexandros Mallias,  
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**As this conference is held within the framework of the celebrations of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Independence of Albania ,allow me at the outset to express my respect to Albania,its people and its institutions.**

**Since Homer,the journey to Ithaca has always been an individual as well as a collective journey. My generation has been the most pro-European generation in Greece. EUROPE has always been my ideology, synonymoys to freedom , democracy, human rights and solidarity. This has always been my own Europe.**

**Accordingly,I was enthusiastic to accept the invitation to join this Albaniacentric symposium . The theme of the dialogue " The European horizon of Albania" is familiar to me.**

**Notwithstanding ,the present icon of ellipsis of adequate European strategy at a ecumenic level , coupled by the characteristic absence of prognosis ,cohesion and homegeneity during the recent episodes of the Arab Spring,my thesis is clear:**

**The Enlargement Process, open since the Thessaloniki 2003 European Summit to all Balkan countries,is the indispensable smart -power mechanism,the catalyst for changing attitudes and policies.**

**It is also the generator of political dynamics , praxis and synergies for solving problems,including bilateral ones. This is also in line with the principle-indeed axiomatic criterion - of good neighbourly relations and peripheric synergy. Past and recent practice and experience demonstrate that the European integration Odyssey, is the epitome of compromise.It is the difference between symbiosis and sympraxis.**

**My syllogism is that the Thessaloniki 2003 unfinished symphony, orchestrated and conducted by the Hellenic Presidency of the European Enosis ,will not be completed unless all western balkan countries, Albania and the Republic of Kosovo included,join the process.**

**On February,24 ,Serbia's President Boris Tadic and Kosovo's Prime**

Minister Hashim Thaci were compelled to make difficult compromises in order to get to a "Win-Win" accord. They displayed pragmatism. Yet, now, at home, they deal with the so-called "political cost" and the vocal antithesis to the Brussels arrangements.

The fact is that Serbia and Kosovo decided that their integration into the European Union asks for compromises. The Brussels Symphony was the prelude for opening Accession talks with Serbia and for launching the Commission's Feasibility study for Kosovo.

For sure, this one should and will be followed by others in our Balkan microcosmos. Solutions to existing problems require leadership, political will and compromises. I am aware that the term compromise still has a special connotation in the Balkans. Yet, it is the *conditio sine qua non* of the European integration process.

On Greece and Albania.

I advocate the need and indeed the urgency for fresh political efforts to reach a "NEW DEAL" between Greece and Albania, as well as for a deal between Greece and the Republic of Kosovo.

I was told that it is very ambitious, complicated and risky.

I respond that there is no leadership without ambition and assuming risks.

I have in mind a kind of orchestration. Here are some ideas:

- Athens and Prishtina should enter into a structured political dialogue with the aim to conclude a legally binding bilateral basic document; a Treaty to be ratified by the Hellenic and Kosovar Parliaments.
- This document would and should match Greece's interests and concerns. For the Republic of Kosovo, the outcome will be also clear: Recognition.
- In parallel, Kosovo's recognition process by Greece would become the catalyst in revitalising the relations between Tirana and Athens. They suffer for some time now from lack of political will, enthusiasm, innovative thinking and political commitment to overcome existing put solvable issues. There is a lack of high level political engagement.
- Both Tirana and Athens feel comfortable with the current situation. Yet, I advocate that the status quo is not an option. It is not in the best interests of Greece and Albania.
- Let me also emphasize that Greece and Greek-Albanian relations at large, have a rather difficult press in Tirana. Negative commentaries in Tirana, reproduced by the Greek media, do not generate positive energy and good atmosphere.
- From the Albanian side, I earnestly believe that there must be a settlement of the outstanding issue of the ratification of the Agreement

for the Delimitation of the Continental Shelf and the Maritime Zones. From its side ,Greece should proceed to a legislative arrangement of the so -called "State of War" formally lifted by a Decision of the Hellenic Government of August 28 1987.This process could be settled through the amendment of ,or addition to the Agreement for the Delimitation of the Continental Shelf. Accordingly, through its ratification by the Greek and Albanian Parliaments ,any existing misperceptions would be definitely eliminated . I deliberately use the term perceptions as ,in this case, they prevail over reality.

Greece and Albania should also realize that there is an unprecedented , unique in Europe, human capital that links the two countries.

Over twenty per cent of Albania's real population legally reside in Greece as migrant workers. Notwithstanding the problems of the distant past,they are now the best integrated migrants in Greece.The younger generations excel at the schools and Universities. The praise ,however ,should go rather to our societies,to our peoples and at a lesser degree to the two administrations and the political elites.

Let me also emphasize that the presence of the Ethnic Greek Minority and its active involvement and presence in the social,economic,cultural and political life through Albania , epitomizes the historic and close affinities between our two countries.

As a pragmatist,I am certainly aware that the proposed New Deal between Albania and Greece will hardly rally public unanimity and one hundred per cent political support in Tirana and in Athens.Yet, it is up to the major political forces to display leadership . Accountability and vision ,coupled with will and commitment are the fundamental prerequisites for Politics and Diplomacy .Accordingly, I will disappoint those, few indeed, who have criticised me in Athens and in Tirana for proposing such a deal. To those who would like to see in my demarche personal motivations ,I say yes they are very personal . Indeed ,I want my grand-children Melina and Leandros to live in a better world.

Dear friends.

It is my firm belief that in the next ten years , envisioning the future, Albania will be anchored in the European Union's territorial waters. In this context,Albanians could draw some lessons from the recent journey of their Greek friends and neighbours.

You may be also willing to realize that the destruction and looting of

Troy is not just the last Chapter of the Iliad .It is also the first chapter of the Odyssey.Albanians are already very familiar with the Aeniad ( Enea).

You can also look at the good and bad experience of your Greek neighbours to learn how to navigate safely between Scylla and Harybdis and why is important to stop the ears so that none of you may hear the song of the Sirens.-