

# THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GREECE VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE OF ALEXANDRIA

On the afternoon of 12th November 2012, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa awarded the Great Cross of St Mark at the Patriarchal See to His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece Mr. Dimitris Avramopoulos, expressing the gratitude of the ancient Patriarchate through him to the Greek State.

“I feel joy and satisfaction when I knock on your door and find understanding and love from Greece, our beloved homeland”, he said, welcoming Mr. Avramopoulos to the Throne Room. “Greeks always went ahead in peace throughout the lengths and breadths of the world. And we as clergy preach the message of Peace and Love and above all the universal values of Greek Orthodox culture”, said His Beatitude. He also emphasized that “in Egypt we have lived harmoniously for millennia. The noble Egyptian people on hearing Greek feel that we are their brothers. So, in continuing our journey that has spanned many centuries, we follow two directions, the glorious and indelible history of the past with the bright figures of Alexander the Great and the other illustrious Greeks, as well as the Great Fathers and the martyred Patriarchs of the Great City, and the intelligible highway of the future, the spiritual cultivation and development of Africa”.

On his own behalf, His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Dimitris Avramopoulos, who is accompanied on this three-day visit to Egypt, by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Konstantinos Tsiaras, who is responsible for Greeks abroad, described His Beatitude the Patriarch as “a important personality, as well as a humble and simple man who,

combining these two, has shown that he worthily bears this title, and contributes to the strengthening of the Greekness of the hundreds of thousands of fellow Greeks in Africa as well as to their initiatives, the promotion of our homeland, opening bridges of communication with the people of Africa”.

He continued: “The work you do has no need of public or national praise, it daily enjoys recognition from the thousands of children and their families who in you find the answer to many questions, as well as comfort and love.

For many years I have followed your spiritual work, which also has another dimension, through the programmes that you have prepared of the essential support of our fellow human beings. You have worthily undertaken this spiritual mission and you have succeeded something most significant, the empowerment and upgrading of this historic and spiritual institution.

Without concern for the effort which your exchanges entail, you have literally impressed us with how you manage to put this enormous continent into your embrace. And on the other hand the thousands of our fellow human beings who live here take you into their embrace.

This historic institution lasted 2000 years, endured the shocks of history, but had the spiritual strength and has passed through the great list of Patriarchs to this day into your hands, where we feel even more certain and even more powerful as Greeks. It exceeds even these borders, it becomes universal as is the message of Christianity.

Today, when so much is being tested, when the world is changing, and new facts are being created, this is the path that we also wish to follow. Your opinion and your advice over the years have taken root.

Today we can say that if there is a relationship which has lasted through the years, it is the relationship between our two nations. Particularly today, missions such as yours help,

inspire and together with your blessing we are even more powerful in being able to succeed in our mission", said the Greek Minister, adding the encouragement "to give our homeland hope and prospects again.

Mr. Avramopoulos announced that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is opening a new chapter in the relations between Greece and Egypt and generally with the Middle East, a chapter which had come to a standstill during the past years, that chapter of our relationship with the broader region.

In conclusion, the Minister of Foreign Affairs ended by passing on "the deep appreciation and respect of the Prime Minister of Greece Mr. Antonis Samaras" for the work done by the Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa.