

I greet with true satisfaction today's significant event which marks the 1st Energy and Geopolitics Roundtable in Sofia.

For me is an immense honour to attend this conference not only in my current and provisional capacity of the representative of the Greek Presidency of the Council of the E.U., but also and mainly as Ambassador of a neighbouring country which attaches great importance to the energy sector.

Today's event takes place in the aftermath of the Athens Energy Forum, (seven days ago) and of the recent meeting in Budapest (24/2) between the Visegrad countries and three the South eastern European partners, with the perspective to construct a South-North (Aegean-Baltic) gas pipeline, bearing in mind those countries initiative to establish an integrated natural gas market in Central Europe. In this direction we take note of the Follow up meeting in Brussels (4/3).

Equally, we note with satisfaction the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs with the Commissioner Oettinger in Brussels on the 17/3.

These occasions underline the commitment of all stakeholders, in Europe in particular, to accelerate the pace towards further diversification of its energy supply, through the promotion of the South Gas Corridor. Geopolitical considerations need to be taken into account and therefore it is an imperative necessity to explore all possibilities, even old projects, which can guarantee security of energy supply on a regional, on a European, and international level.

As you know the development of energy infrastructure, with the availability of the appropriate funds, constitutes an integral part of energy security. We support all efforts within the E.U. (and the Connecting Europe Facility) in cooperation with our partners, to try to reduce peripheral isolation and to enhance internal energy

balance, energy efficiency, industrial competitiveness, development of renewable sources e.t.c..

More specifically, the priorities of our current Presidency focus on a) the strengthening of the EU's external energy dimension, b) in addressing the future of the Energy Community as well as the multilateral relations with Mediterranean countries and c) advancing the EU's objective that no member state remains isolated by 2015, including peripheral and island regions.

We are very much appreciative of the commitment of the Bulgarian authorities to move swiftly towards the construction of the IGB Interconnector to the Trans Adriatic Pipeline and their interest for the building an LNG terminal station in Northern Greece, in addition to the expansion of the Revithousa terminal capacity with the construction of a third LNG reservoir, benefitting both our countries and not only.

We look forward, in this respect, to the scheduling of a first technical Experts meeting here in Sofia.

We would furthermore envisage the possibility to achieve a single price for natural gas purchase so that an effective market equilibrium is attained among member states. This topic as well as other relevant developments and options (such as the East Med pipeline) will be discussed at the informal ministerial meeting next May (22-24/5), in Athens, before the elections for the European Parliament.

Concluding I wish to congratulate warmly the organisers (IENE) for today's important initiative and to wish full success in their future plans.

I express my conviction that the energy projects on the table will be duly marked with progress soon.

Thank you