

## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT - PLENARY SESSION

### DEBATE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

#### STATEMENT BY ALEXIS TSIPRAS - GREEK PRIME MINISTER

*Strasbourg, 11 September 2018*

Dear President of the European Parliament. Dear Members of European Parliament dear friends. Thank you very much for the honor of having invited me to present to the European Parliament. Our ideas and our worries for the future of Europe and to discuss them with you. It's important and also symbolic that you give me this possibility. Just a few days after the end of a great adventure the adjustment programs and the clean exit from the support programs of Greece after eight years. The last time I had the honor to speak to you Greece was in a very difficult situation.

The policy of deficits and of wasting away the public money and the extended corruption of previous governments had led my country to utilize bankruptcy and parallels the fact that institutions didn't manage to advance and to foster the necessary structural reforms in the first years of the program. And their intention to press for austerity meant that we were on the verge of bankruptcy and also of an explosion social explosion from 2010 to 2014. Greece lost one fourth of its GDP. As unemployment poverty and social exclusion and they soared and at the same time the public debt soared. There were no investments. There was no public investments and many thousands of young scientists left our country.

The economic crisis in Greece and the fact they did not manage to deal with it turned it into a crisis for the whole of Europe. When I spoke here you may remember that about half a cheered me while the other half jeered me. But there were very few among you who believed that I would manage we would cope but Greece manage Greece coped. Three years down the line it's a different country. We managed to become from a part of the problem a part of the solution for Europe had a clean exit from the last three year program is of course a success. First of all of the Greek people who sacrificed quite a lot to make sure that our country would stay in the heart of Europe.

But it's also a success for the whole of Europe. We proved that it has a spirit of solidarity and cooperation we can solve crises. So we come out of this adventure in a stronger position. We are standing on our own two feet and are optimistic about the future. For the first time since the crisis began the sacrifices of our people had an effect. We've managed to have a fiscal consolidation. We did deep reforms and breaks with the past things that should have taken place decades ago.

We managed to go from the spiralling of the crisis to growth we have now Nune investments which make us a transport hub in our area. Furthermore we have proven that there is a way out of crisis without destroying the social fabric. We supported the weakest the most vulnerable. We managed to end the humanitarian crisis. We gave access to the health system to millions of people who are uninsured and we did manage primary surpluses three years earlier. Nobody would believe there would have been possible because we managed to combat tax evasion. There is no more wasting. There is no more corruption in public health and in public investments we did important reforms like the unification of the Social Security funds and through the sustainable adjustment of our public debt we become again economically sovereigns.

We come back to the position that is due to us in the European developments. Last year we came back to growth return to growth and for this year the estimates are that we have 2.5 percent growth

the last three years. We were champions in absorbing European development funding and in 2017 with a second crowned country in absorbing and using funds from the Yunker plan we've had foreign investment of three point six billion which is the best of the last decade. Within three years unemployment fell by more than 7 percent. We've created more than ,00000 new jobs. We supported public hospitals. We have a unified first level public health. We managed to face the weaknesses in schools.

And we've increased our spending on scientific research to 1 percent of our GDP and we're fighting to stop the brain drain to turn it into a brain gain helping the entrepreneurship of the young. And there is also as social income of solidarity. This is a Greek version of minimum guaranteed income and more than 6,0000 citizens receive this amount. So this means that poverty and social exclusion decrease we create a network of social policies to help the most vulnerable. At the same time and going against the current trends in opinion we managed to increase individual rights and freedoms for our citizens. For the first time we are granting citizenship to second generation immigrants who are born and bred in Greece and we have the recognition of sex sexual and gender identity and we have agreed and adopted the the possibility of marriage for same sex couples and we've abolished the Sharia for the Muslim community and we are creating a mosque for the Muslims in Athens in a Europe where there's more racism and xenophobia.

Greece could what it could to manage the tremendous migrant and refugee flows within a climate of protection of international law. While other countries created barriers against refugees. We despised are difficult economic position. We rejected hatred. Our local communities gave lessons of humanity and we work together with the European Union of international organizations to face up to this challenge today the asylum authority which did not exist five years ago manages the greatest number in relation to our population. All applications for asylum and we contribute to peace and stability.

In an area which is destabilized our broader area despite the instability and nationalist increase in Turkey we managed to have channels of communication still open and that means safeguarding peace in the GNC and we're trying to find collaborative solutions for the refugee issue and we've started talking for a just and sustainable solution for the Cyprus issue in this destabilize area of the Eastern Mediterranean together with Cyprus. We are a beacon of European stability. We've broadened our cooperation with Egypt Israel Palestine and Jordan.

And at the same time we deepen European cooperation and co development. This means that we open a European perspective for the Balkan countries and the the summit of our efforts is the historic agreement of Prosper's with our neighbor and we continue our dialogue with Albania after 26 years of destructive nationalism. We've managed talking with the with the prime minister Orton's Eifel the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution without the use or the threat or use of force through diplomacy and dialogue. This is an agreement which could be a model for solving other issues in our area.

Members of the European Parliament let me stress that our exit from the last program of fiscal a government does not mean that we will go back to the past. In our country. Quite the contrary. We are determined to avoid the mistakes and the behaviours of the past which led to the crisis the end of the adjustment programs does not mean a return to the past. It is a historic break with the past. It is a new beginning. Which will consolidate stability and security heals all wounds and gradually opens a new development. Perspectives for our country. In the years to come. Let me show you that we'll continue our reform efforts. We will manage to rationalize more and more our state to modernize public administration to fight red tape to deepen the Democratic radical changes which will take place with the upcoming constitutional reform.

But we will continue our path of fiscal stability and one of our priorities will be just development and the protection of the working people Greece and the Greeks have proven these last years that they are really deeply dedicated to the idea of European integration. They had to suffer a lot but they insisted on the European path of our country despite the fact that some in Europe in particular the most dominating dominant ideas hurts our people. Let us after those eight years of crises all come to some conclusions and these conclusions should help us decide what kind of Europe we want and how we'll protected against new crises in the future.

What is at stake to do is something of an existential nature. Until now the management of the financial crisis and the refugee crisis and the security crisis has shown up many deficits and contradictions. And this means that all this cry all these crises could become an existential structural crisis for the European project. Let me stress the failure of the European Union to give Democratic and functional solutions to the present challenges would unavoidably lead to the triumph of chauvinism and an increase in nationalist conflicts.

This will mean that we will go back to fragmentation without unity without cohesion without an international role and perspective. During the financial crisis the European Union instead of becoming more democratic through the use of institutional framework of the Treaty of Lisbon. During this period we became more technocratic and centred on net national states. Decisions were taken behind closed doors in informal meetings without a possibility of being responsible towards the citizens and we had technocratic institutions like the troika who had the keys of economic sovereignty and did not and were not responsible to anybody.

Instead of being accused of history and instead of being isolated came to the forefront the refugee crisis that followed just confirmed the inability in Europe to go forward since many of the member states do not believe in its founding values. If the logic of seclusion and not cooperation dominates. If the logic that each one can manage by themselves instead of sharing the refusal of European solidarity the poison of hatred and xenophobia become once more apparent in the year in Europe 70 years after the tragedy of fascism we just don't have to do with the electoral success of some parties of the far right populists.

But there is more xenophobia more chauvinism within the democratic political parties. Racism and xenophobia are becoming the dominant political discourse in traditional conservative political forces and not just in them. This means that in many crucial countries for the European project the balance of forces becomes dangerous and this could lead to European decompositional. You were afraid. Some of you in here in 2015 you were afraid of us. Of Syriza because we are fighting for a better life for a better Europe. We believed that whoever doubts the current policy of neo liberal policies and disparities is a danger for our common house.

But three years down the line those who believed in that should accept that they were wrong. The real threat for Europe is not those who fight to change it but those who struggle to destroy it. Those who are at the other end of the spectrum vs.I.V the all human values of solidarity. Those of us who believe dear friends the members of the European Parliament those of us who believe in the European vision we believe to put aside our real and serious differences to face this great danger. The European idea should not be crushed. Between the destructive neo liberalism and the horrible far right we have to give a decisive answer that the only way to safeguard the European unification is to upgrade democracy justice and transparency through bold reforms.

We should foster the perspective of a better Europe with European solutions for the challenges we face for the refugee and migrant issue for climate change for security for the democratic reform of

the eurozone so that hope can defeat the far right fear. We do not need more borders in Europe and less solidarity we need a new social contract for social cohesion and the prosperity of our peoples. We need a deepening of the European unification a stronger European Parliament stronger European institutions through democratic and social control. We don't need a new priest cast of austerity we need a new eurozone with mechanisms for finding disparities we need a new social framework to help cohesion. We need an obligatory social pillar we need a reform of the asylum system and a just sharing of the burden we need common European mechanism for fighting natural disasters.

We need to strengthen the European perspective of Turkey and to make this great country become Democratic again and we need a European foreign policy which will contribute to the solution of the crises we're facing. Chairman members of the Russian parliament to conclude let me say that these last three years Greece has managed to become a part of the solution instead of being a part of the problem for Europe. We've overcome the financial crisis. We manage to bear the burden with dignity of this great refugee crisis. We've opened new possibilities for the cooperation of our peoples with a peaceful policy which makes us. A player for peace and stability in this stable area of peace and with again in the Balkans. All these efforts over these three years is a good prospect despite the fact that there are many clouds in our European sky.

We show that there is a way if we really believe and if you've really put your back to it you can manage. And we believe that is the way to the future of Europe. We have difficult fights. Instead of US the European elections next May will be more than just one more election. It will be a combat on the basis of principles and values to defeat the extreme neo liberalism and far right populism to manage to transform the European idea to increase unity and solidarity among the European peoples in this fight or progressive democratic and pro European forces. Have a duty to stand side by side on the same side of history. We should not let Europe slide back to the past. Thank you very much.

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