

INTRODUCTION SPEECH

By Maria Vassara

Journalist and Broadcaster

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening,

I have the pleasure and honour of welcoming you to the Inauguration of the Greek Shipping Hall of Fame. An important institution that comes to pay tribute to eminent personalities of Greek shipping who put their stamp on its course and evolution. Allow me to welcome you with a short journey in time.

One morning, nearly 10,000 years ago on some shore in the place we now call Greece, one of our prehistoric ancestors pushes a piece of wood into the sea.

From then until now the sea-journey of the Greeks has continued incessantly through the centuries. First of all in the shell of a walnut. Afterwards with sail. After that with coal, and nowadays with the most modern instruments ever made.

From that spring morning when a resident of Milos began his voyage 135 miles west to reach Trizina with a primitive boat, laden with obsidian from his homeland to give the ability to people of the Peloponnese to craft these valuable tools of the Stone Age, the people of this country have been eternal seamen.

Ten thousand years later, the eternal seamen descended from those heroic pioneers, manage the largest merchant fleet in the world, establishing a tradition of prosperity, freedom and culture of rare duration and durability. Continuity without interruption, without pause for breath, without fatigue from generation to generation. With ever-increasing vigour and creative dynamism.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Always Seamen: Greeks and the Sea is the title of a show that from 2005 has been broadcast on national television, and which aims to showcase and highlight the achievements of Greek shipping, the personalities who have shaped it, and the traditionally nautical regions from where their adventures at sea began.

I feel especially fortunate because through researching and producing this series I had the opportunity to see the maritime world with different eyes and to meet prominent Greeks with a decisive role in the evolution of the global shipping industry.