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Joint Statement on Third United States – Greece Strategic Dialogue

MEDIA NOTE

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The Governments of the United States and Greece held the third United States – Greece Strategic Dialogue in Washington, DC on October 14, 2021. Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikos Dendias and U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken launched the Strategic Dialogue, which included high-level interagency representation from both countries.

The Strategic Dialogue underscores the deepening cooperation between the United States and Greece. This year marks Greece's bicentennial as a modern European state, and both the United States and Greece are highlighting an ever-stronger bilateral and transatlantic relationship based on shared values and interests, and reaffirming the will to enhance cooperation in the areas described below.

Begin Text:

Regional Cooperation

The United States and Greece underscored the continued importance of working together to strengthen peace and prosperity across the region. The two governments exchanged views on the Eastern Mediterranean, the Western Balkans, European and transatlantic institutions, and migration. The two countries also discussed wider international issues, including developments in the MENA region, Russia, and China. Greece and the United States reinforced their commitment to a rules-based system and respect for international law, including international human rights obligations. They lauded the resumption of exploratory talks and stressed the importance of avoiding destabilizing actions. They emphasized the importance of diplomacy, good-neighborly relations and peaceful resolution of differences between countries. Both noted the importance of respecting sovereignty, sovereign rights, international law, including the law of the sea, and existing regional frameworks to prevent future tensions. They also reiterated their dedication to enhancing their close cooperation, using all appropriate means at their disposal to safeguard stability and security in the wider region. The United States applauded Greece's recent efforts to deepen ties with neighbors across the Eastern Mediterranean to enhance stability. The two sides reiterated their desire to bolster cooperation through the 3+1 format (Greece, Cyprus, Israel, plus the United States) on energy issues, economic development, counterterrorism, and the climate crisis and associated humanitarian challenges which recently affected the region. Greece and the United States reaffirmed the importance of the full, consistent and in good faith implementation of the Prespa Agreement. Both parties resolved to support continued integration, investment, and infrastructure development of Western Balkan partners.

The United States and Greece both continue to strongly support the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Western Balkans, including Kosovo, and stress the importance of urgently commencing accession negotiations between EU and both Albania and North

Macedonia according to the set conditionalities. Both sides highlighted recent successes in national public health policies designed to curb the COVID-19 pandemic and cited the need to dispel disinformation and other malign influences that threatened public safety. Both sides discussed priorities in responding to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Greece shared the progress made in processing and integrating asylum-seekers and refugees; both countries affirmed the importance of respecting the human rights of asylum seekers, migrants, and refugees.

Defense and Security

The United States and Greece welcomed the recent update to the Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement (MDCA), which greatly contributes to the security of both nations and reflects our long-term, deepening and expanding, strategic defense partnership and cooperation and Greece's geostrategic importance in contributing to the stability of the region. Both sides reiterated their firm determination mutually to safeguard and protect the security, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of their respective countries. They both emphasized the continued importance of bilateral exercises and training activities throughout Greece that enhanced their ability to address regional security issues. Both countries expressed interest in enhancing cooperation on security issues in the Western Balkans, Middle East, and North Africa, and the Eastern Mediterranean regions, and in that respect the United States acknowledged the importance of Greece in promoting stability and cooperation in the wider periphery. The two governments expressed the joint desire to assist each other in maintaining strong and capable militaries and increase their modernization and interoperability. The United States highlighted the F-16, S-70B, and P-3B upgrades and Greece's procurement of MH-60R anti-submarine helicopters. The United States welcomes Greece's expression of interest to join the F-35 fighter program. The United States expressed appreciation that Greece continued to exceed the 2014 Wales Summit pledge to spend at least 2 percent of GDP on defense and 20 percent of its defense budget on modernizing major equipment. The United States also thanked Greece for its many contributions to NATO's 20-year mission in Afghanistan.

Law Enforcement and Counterterrorism

Both sides emphasized their commitment to continuing close cooperation to combat organized crime, cybercrime, complex financial crimes, the illicit use of cryptocurrencies, malign influence, and terrorism. The two governments restated their shared interest in continuing law enforcement training to facilitate mutual legal assistance requests and extraditions, and enhance operations related to criminal investigations and homeland security reforms. The United States praised Greece for the implementation of its Passenger Name Record legislation and discussed Greek efforts to implement biometric-enabled national identity documents, which would permit a return to full Visa Waiver Program status. Greece underlined its recent efforts to increase border security infrastructure and surveillance, which helped stem the flow of cross-border crime and irregular migration. The United States and Greece underscored the need to increase cooperation with Western Balkan countries on law enforcement and border security programs. Greece announced the implementation of significant amendments to Greek law concerning preventing terrorism and violent extremism.

Trade and Investment

The United States and Greece welcomed the initial recovery of their economies from the COVID-19 pandemic and looked forward to deepening trade and investment across various sectors. Both governments stressed the importance of bilateral trade and investment consistent with broader multilateral frameworks such as the U.S.-EU trade policy. They lauded the recent inaugural meeting of the U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC), with the aim to expand and deepen transatlantic investment and update the rules-based framework for the 21st century economy. In this context, Greece stressed the importance of a transatlantic accord for removal of trade measures against EU on steel & aluminum that directly affect bilateral trade. Greece also stressed the importance of enhancing bilateral cooperation on mutual recognition of control systems for the entry of Greek agri-food products to the United States. Both sides hailed the presence of significant new U.S. investments in Greece's technology and digital sectors following the 2020 signing of our Science and Technology Agreement and Greece's removal from the USTR 301 Watch List. The

United States congratulated Greece on its continued development of Thessaloniki as a regional technological and educational hub and expressed support for significant U.S. tech investments to further develop Greece's digital economy. Greece highlighted the main incentives granted for private and strategic investments with a special reference to the Emblematic Investments and the Just Development Transition Plan. Both sides welcomed bilateral cooperation on emerging technologies. Both sides reiterated their support for women's economic empowerment, with the United States highlighting TechCamp Thessaloniki, a U.S.-funded program designed to support women-led startups and create equal opportunities in the entrepreneurship ecosystem. The United States and Greece noted they look forward to exchanging views on trends and best practices regarding investment screening. The United States highlighted the new Build Back Better World initiative as a possible area of cooperation for investment in low and middle-income economies. The United States also welcomed the investment of Greek companies in the United States. Through an innovative program in cooperation with Enterprise Greece, 43 companies from Greece participated in the annual SelectUSA Investment Summit last June – the largest delegation ever from Greece. The United States welcomed more investment successes from Greece. The United States welcomed the proposal of Greece for the signing of an MOU on Tourism. Both sides reiterated the importance of enhancing bilateral tourism flows. Greece expressed its satisfaction for the maintenance of flights uniting the two countries. Both countries intend to consider the establishment of new all year-round air connections.

Energy and Environment

The United States and Greece recommitted to their shared goals of increasing energy diversification and security, promoting fair and equitable access to greener sources of energy, and addressing climate change through decarbonization policies. The United States lauded Greece for its growing role as a regional energy hub and welcomed completion of the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline and progress on the Interconnector Greece Bulgaria, set to become operational in 2022. Greece shared developments on other regional energy projects that will further diversify regional energy supplies and support the phaseout of coal, such as the planned Greece-North Macedonia Interconnector and the Floating Storage Regasification Unit in Alexandroupoli. Both sides celebrated the increasingly interconnected energy relationship between Greece and the United States, both in terms of bilateral trade and investment and as a positive driver of progress towards energy security and diversification goals. Greece pointed out the importance of natural gas discoveries by Israel, Cyprus and Egypt as a valuable diversified energy source for southern and southeastern Europe.

Greece reiterated its goal to phase out lignite by 2025, and the United States praised Greece's steps forward on its 2019 National Energy and Climate Action Plan. Both sides acknowledged the importance of a diversified strategy to support the energy transition and our broader goal to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. This includes opportunities to expand energy efficiency initiatives and increase the supply of clean energy resources like offshore wind, energy storage, and hydrogen. The United States highlighted increasing U.S. investments in green energy projects in Greece and stressed the need for continued decarbonization and renewable energy development, and Greece shared updates on its planned windfarms and solar energy projects. The United States affirmed support for Greece's National Initiative Addressing Climate Change Impacts on Cultural and Natural Heritage and welcomed the participation of American companies in Greece's innovative hydrogen power initiatives. Both governments underlined the unique role Greece could play in breaking regional energy monopolies, facilitating energy investment in developing economies, and confronting the global climate crisis head-on.

Humanitarian Challenges and Disaster Preparedness

The United States and Greece acknowledged the long-term challenges posed by climate change, particularly the recent wildfires across the Mediterranean region, and committed to establishing a new Strategic Dialogue pillar on Humanitarian Challenges and Disaster Preparedness. Greece highlighted its resolve to confront these challenges by showcasing the creation of its new Ministry on Climate and Civil Protection. The United States and Greece underscored their commitment to develop stronger ties between their respective agencies responsible for disaster prevention-preparedness and resilience building, including wildfire response and recovery. Greece thanked the U.S. for providing a P-8 Poseidon aircraft to assist Greece in fighting historic wildfires and welcomes a

U.S. assessment team which is on the ground in Greece to assist in post-fire recovery. Greece expressed interest in capacity building related to fire suppression and organizational disaster management to tackle acute crises. Over the longer-term, Greece emphasized the importance of soil stabilization, erosion control, and reforestation. The United States and Greece discussed the importance of an implementation plan for future training and agreed to begin working level consultations.

People-to-People Ties

The United States and Greece reaffirmed the meaningful connections that further mutual understanding between the people of both nations, especially in Greece's bicentennial year. Both countries acknowledged the challenges the pandemic posed and remain committed to supporting cultural and educational exchanges, particularly through the Fulbright Program, for which Greece has reinstated its annual contributions, and the recent signing of the Cultural Property Agreement, which stands as an enduring commitment to stem cultural property trafficking and to preserve heritage. Both countries also reiterated a commitment to collaborate on STEM programming, including via Mission Greece's expanded American Spaces program, English language training, and the TechGirls program. The United States reaffirmed support of Greece's efforts to establish new collaborations between U.S. and Greek universities.

The United States and Greece look forward to exploring opportunities to enhance vocational education and training in Greece as well as programs such as the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) that develop cross cultural and leadership skills while strengthening the transatlantic relationship. The two countries also reiterated a commitment to work together on capacity building and further collaboration in the creative industries, and in particular in the film and audio-visual sector, and to continue to explore public-private partnerships in culture and technology. Both countries expressed continued support for Holocaust Education and the United States praised Greece's first presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, dedicated to preserving the memory of historical events which are significant to both countries.

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