

Speech by the Director of the Acropolis Museum, Professor Nicholaos Stambolidis for the opening of: "the Museum under the Museum"

Madam President of the Republic, knowing your busy schedule, I would like to thank you very much for being here this evening.

Let me start with two elements directly or indirectly related to today's opening of the Museum of Excavation, namely the neighborhood and the city of ancient Athens. I will stop at three, of the many definitions, for what constitutes a city: 1st definition: Sophocles, *Antigone* (737-739) Dialogue between Haemon and Creon Aimon: "It is not called a city that belongs to a man" Creon: "The city is considered to belong to the one who holds the power" Aemon: "You would make a wonderful monarch in the desert" Therefore, the city is the set of citizens, the municipality, the city-democracy. The city is the people. 2nd definition: Thucydides, *Histories* 2.15 The historian refers to the city of Athens (I translate the relevant passage).

"For its old habitation until today [meaning in the 5th c. BC] and the acropolis is called polis by the Athenians. Well, the city is structured, inhabited, fortified or unfortified, space." 3rd poetic definition: Konstantinos Cavafy: "The city will follow you / In the streets it will you return the same / And in the same neighborhoods you will grow old..." A neighborhood of this city, of Athens, is also the one in which we are all here tonight, to grope, like her "king Asinis", the touch of people on the stones, in ruins of life that it measures in depth four and a half thousand (4,500) years. In the superimposed layers of her habitation to read - each with the measure and its manner - those which archaeologists, as other surgeons, brought to light from the body of the earth and from the depths of time.

To paraphrase M. Anagnostaki's verse optimistically: yes bring to life the shadows of houses and walk on streets old ones, in a city that is not dead but one reconstitutes it in his imagination, through its material remains, objects and fragments of works: statues, reliefs, vases, terracottas, coins, jewelry and toys: from clay, stone and marble, glass and ivory, copper and silver... 1150 (one thousand one hundred and fifty) items in a 35 long display case meters that looks like a bright crack in time, like a crack in space and as a last layer on top of its archaeological layers excavation, which you see around you. It then

continues with a showcase, which houses memories from her destruction of Athens by Sulla in 86 BC.

The Museum's end of the excavation is defined by an enclosure hall with statues and reliefs of gods and men: Athens, Artemis, Cybele, Aphrodite and Asclepius, gods close to Athenians and in their appeals for the protection of the city, for the development of their children, for the love and healing of the human pain but also portraits of philosophers familiar to us, Plato, Aristotle... even of Empress Eudokia. All these, among many others, shared didactic, 'speak' eloquent about the activities of people: men, women and children, for health and hygiene, work, trade, the transactions, the economy, their beliefs and faiths, their spiritual pursuits.

Works different from the architectural perfection of the monuments Holy Rock and the surrender of the soul to the aesthetic supervision of exhibits of the Acropolis Museum, the Excavation Museum, "the Museum under the Museum" highlights and refers to things everyday, which are near and touch human existence! They are the everyday objects of these, or some of the people, mainly citizens of Athens but also residents and slaves and foreigners, who passed through this neighborhood, as well as through other neighborhoods ancient city: Kollytos, Kerameikos, the ancient Agora, the neighborhood of the sanctuaries of Ilissos and Agrotera Artemis and all of them other neighborhoods of the municipalities of Attica; these or some of them, which they created the great works, the monuments of the Acropolis itself and of Parthenon and those who then preserved them, as far as time and history allowed.

The 'Excavation Museum' is yet another argument why the architectural sculptures of the Parthenon must return, to be reunited with their siblings at the Acropolis Museum: so that the visitor has the unique way to see and approach them in an experiential way.

With thanks for the support of the Bank of Greece - to you, Governor, Yiannis Stournara and your partners, our big thanks. Thanking also the Ministry of Culture, all Directorates, Departments and the employees of our Museum and especially those who worked closer to the completion of this project, I call the Head of Collections and Exhibitions to take the floor.

