

**Presidency  
of the Hellenic Republic**

**Speech delivered at the ceremony at which the President of the National  
Council of Hellenic Notaries took over the Presidency of the Council of  
Notariats of the European Union**

I am here today to pay tribute to the role played by the notariat in these difficult times. The President, Mr Georgios Rouskas, thanked me for some of the things I have done. But you too, I assure you, have done your duty in a very difficult time for the country. I am not forgetting, not only because of my present position, but also in my capacity as an academic, that the notary is a public officer, that he performs a public function, a public service. And it is from this point of view that the State as well as the citizens must view it. The importance of the notary's role with regard to the rights he protects has too often been underestimated. There are many rights, not only the right to individual property, which is in any case a fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution, by the European legislation, but also - it should be remembered - by the Council of Europe legislation. It is an emblematic right on which representative democracy is based. You all know that representative democracy is based on fundamental human rights. I would add that representative democracy stems from the American revolution, based on the fundamental right to individual property. But you, you exercise functions that go beyond that right and concern many real and personal rights. You are defending them in difficult times because these rights are in crisis, in danger, and not only in our country. We all know - thank you for allowing me to repeat this - in a very difficult period, when Greece was going from one crisis to the next and undergoing the successive assessments imposed by the Eurogroup, what conditions were laid down so that we could continue. And then, without you, perhaps one of the most important evaluations would not have had a favourable outcome. You have fully accomplished your task without giving up anything in the field of human rights. You have risen to the occasion, not only as public officers but also as Greek citizens. That is how we have stayed in Europe, of which we are an integral part,

in order to contribute to the European process too. But also to claim, when necessary, our rightful place in our European family.

I am sure that the Greek Presidency will be particularly successful, as befits Greek tradition and Greek notaries.