

In the name of God

Good evening
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to address such a distinguished audience. I am very pleased to be here and share some points with you.

It is more than a year since I have been posted to Greece and have had good chance to know more about potentials in this beautiful country with a friendly people. Indeed I feel at home.

You know, our two countries have had a long history of relations dating back to many centuries. It is natural for the two nations to develop and promote cooperation in all areas such as trade, politics, economic and cultural exchanges ...

But first, let me say a few words about Iran's economy and give some statistics in this regard.

Iran is a country with:

- GDP about 1400 billion Dollars (purchasing power parity) as the world's 18th largest economy.
- 450 billion Dollars economy, skilled and educated workforce, 80 million population and cheap access to energy resources among the country's advantages.
- Young and highly educated population (40% under the age of 24 year and around 500 000 graduates every year.

Iran possesses the world's second largest reserves of natural gas (17%), and fourth largest oil reserves (10%) and world's seventh largest mineral reserves.

Iran also has significant potential across several sectors including wind and other renewable energy, IT, water, engineering, innovative and new technologies, shipping industries, mining

Beside oil and gas, investors can also seek opportunities in petrochemicals, steel, copper mining, pharmaceuticals, telecoms, aviation, machinery, tourism, construction and renovation of hotels, information and communication technology.

A large consumer market and a strong industrial manufacturing base and lowest risk for any economic cooperation compared with that of other regional states.

In addition to its own market of 80m people, Iran is the gateway for its landlocked neighbours such as Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan and Armenia to the free waters of the world. Iran can also offer safety and security which are important elements in transit of goods. This makes Iran the safest and most efficient trade route for its neighbours.

Iran's coastline along the Persian Gulf stretches for 3, 000 km with major ports such as Bandar Abbas, Bushehr, and others. Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf including Kish and Qeshm have excellent capacities for development of shipping cooperation. In a feasibility study some years ago it was reported that a railway connection between Qeshm Island and mainland Iran could open a new trade route between Western Europe and the Far East with almost half the time it takes to use the other routes.

There are 10, 000 km of railway line under use in Iran with a further 10, 000 km under construction. Iran is the connecting point of the north-south and east-west corridors as well as being the main link in the Silk Road. In the past few years the Oman-Iran-Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan corridor and Iran-Turkmenistan-Kazakhstan corridor have become operational. The two railway links have a potential for transport of 20m tons of goods annually.

Besides the railway links, Iran has 300, 000 km of interconnecting highways and roads.”

There are forecasts for Iran of economic growth at 5% to 6% a year, investment 7% to 10% a year and imports 8% to 14% a year.

Iranians, whose heritage is of one of the oldest civilisations in the world, have always been industrious and innovative. During the height of the sanctions aimed at the country’s basic assets and trades, just about the harshest restrictions ever imposed on any country and that would have brought many nations to their knees, the spirit of constructive entrepreneurship helped them carry on.

After implementation of the agreement known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the ground was ready for expansion of ties between Iran and European countries.

With the lifting of economic sanctions and banking restrictions, economic cooperation between Iran and the rest of the world has entered a new phase. The new situation offered significant potential for foreign companies to make new deals in different areas.

The visit by Prime Minister Tsipras and a high ranking delegation last January, and signing important documents including Road Map on expansion of cooperation between the two countries, as a turning point in two countries good relation, prepared the best chance for both sides to use the opportunity in order to expand their presence in different fields.

European countries and Greece have never suffered loss from their economic and commercial cooperation with Iran and even in times of sanctions, Iran has fulfilled all its commitments regarding all private and state companies and it has in fact been and will be a reliable trade partner for them.

It is good to tell that after the deal with 5+1, more than 5.5 billion Dollars of investments in different projects has been approved, mainly on energy and oil activities, food industries, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, car industries.

Several projects have been studied and now are ready for investment as joint venture. I suggest to Interested groups to visit Iranian organization for investment website on www.iio.ir. I am pleased to say that interest in the Iranian market has been overwhelming.

I would very much like to invite Greek companies for more active presence in the Iranian market and use the post-sanctions opportunities to seek a share of the revitalized and expansive market.

Iran chamber of commerce is going to host a trade delegation from Greek Federation of Industries in May and I would like to suggest you to join them and use this visit to explore more opportunities for cooperation with Iran.

I'm quite confident that such a good meetings in Greece and Iran will provide best chance to know more about potentials in our countries, and looking forward to see Greek companies, which have a considerable share in world trade, with Iranian partners also make up a good portion of trade between our two countries.

Let me conclude with the big picture. There are good capacities for cooperation between Iran and Greece , and we need both sides' efforts to materialize those capacities. Now is the best time for Iran and Greece to strengthen ties in all areas.

Thank you.