



## **Roundtable Discussion**

### **From the High Seas to the Consumer: Securing Maritime Trade and the Global Economy**

**Thursday, January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2026**  
United Nations Headquarters, Conference Room 8  
New York

## **SPEAKERS**



## **H.E. Aglaia Balta**

Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations

Married to Ambassador (ret.) Dimitri Alexandrakis. They have one son, Menelaos.

### **Studies**

Law Degree, Athens University, Greece (1983)

### **Professional Career**

1984-1986: Attaché, Asia Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens.

1986-1991: Diplomatic Cabinet of the President of the Hellenic Republic, Athens.

1991-1995: Consul, Consulate General of Greece in London, UK.

1995-1997: First Secretary, Embassy of Greece in Seoul, Republic of Korea.

1997-1999: Desk Officer for Albania, Southeastern Europe Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens.

1999-2003: Deputy Representative. Political and Security Committee, Permanent Representation of Greece to the European Union. Brussels, Belgium.

2003-2006: European Correspondent, Common Foreign Security Policy Directorate, MFA, Athens.

2006-2008: Deputy Head of the Diplomatic Cabinet of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, Athens.

2008-2012: Consul General of Greece in New York, USA.

2012-2016: Ambassador of Greece to Chile.

2016-2018: Chief of Protocol Department. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens.

2018-2022: Ambassador of Greece to France.

Aug 2022: Promoted to the rank of full Ambassador.

2022-2024: Chief of Protocol Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens.

2024 to present: Ambassador of Greece to Spain.

### **Foreign Languages**

English, French, Spanish

### **Decorations**

Greek

Order of the Phoenix of the Hellenic Republic, Grand Commander, 2012.

Order of the Phoenix of the Hellenic Republic, Grand Cross, 2024.

### **Foreign**

Order of Merit, Grand Cross (Orden al Mérito de Chile, Gran Cruz), Republic of Chile, 2016.

Order of Merit of the Italian Republic (Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana), Commander, 2017.

Order of Prince Henry, Commander, Portuguese Republic, 2017.

National Order of Merit, Companion, Republic of Malta. 2023.

Cross of Recognition, 3rd class, Republic of Latvia, 2024.



### **Symeon Tsomokos**

Founder & President, Delphi Economic Forum

Symeon G. Tsomokos is the Founder and President of the Delphi Economic Forum, an independent and impartial non-profit organization committed to deliver and promote innovative ideas for sustainable and competitive growth for Southeast Europe and the East Mediterranean.

He established SGT S.A in Athens in 1997, and TGI in Belgrade in 2001.

He is also the Founder of the Business Council for Greece-United States, the Greek-Hungarian Business Council, the Greek-Egyptian Business Council, while in 2006 he established the Greece-Serbia Chamber of Commerce.

In the past he has served as Commercial Specialist at the US Embassy in Athens (1973-1980) and CEO at the American-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce (1980-1997). He has also served as Secretary General & Treasurer of the Council of the American Chambers of Commerce based in Europe (1990-1993) and as Secretary General of the Business Council Greece-Turkey (1993-1998). In 1993, he was an Eisenhower Exchange Fellow.

A graduate of the Athens University of Economics and Business and a graduate of the Varvakeio High School.



## **Georgios Gerapetritis**

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hellenic Republic

### Academia:

Professor of Constitutional Law, Faculty of Law, University of Athens (faculty member as of 2003)  
Director of the Department of Public Law at the Faculty of Law, University of Athens (2016-2019)  
Member of the Rectorship at the Faculty of Law, University of Athens (2016-2019)  
Visiting Professor, Faculty of Law, London School of Economics (2018-2019)  
Visiting Fellow at the Institute of European and Comparative Law, University of Oxford (2015-16)  
Visiting Scholar at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, University of London (2015-16)  
Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Global Law and Policy (Harvard Law School) (2012)  
German Marshal Memorial Fund Fellow (2003)  
Fellow at the French Conseil d'Etat (Supreme Administrative Court of the country) (1995)  
Chevening Scholar of the British Council for postgraduate research in the United Kingdom (1995)  
Scholar of the Hellenic Scholarship Foundation for postgraduate research in the United Kingdom, France, Belgium (1992-1994)

### Professional:

Attorney-at-Law, Partner at Athanassiou-Gerapetritis and Associates Law Firm ([www.ag-law.gr](http://www.ag-law.gr)), pleading before the Hellenic Council of State, the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights  
Minister of State (July 2019- May 2023)  
Minister of Foreign Affairs (June 2023 - )

### Education:

1985 – 1989 LL.B. Faculty of Law, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens | 1991 – 1992 LL.M. in Constitutional and Administrative Law. Faculty of Law, University of Edinburgh | 1992 – 1995 D.Phil in Public and European Union Law. Faculty of Law, University of Oxford

### Languages:

Greek (native)  
English (fluent)  
French (fluent)  
Italian (good)  
German (basic)

### Personal Data:

Date of birth: 26 June 1967, Karpathos, Greece



## **Vasilis Kikilias**

Minister of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy, Hellenic Republic

Vasilis Kikilias was born in 1974 in Athens. He is a graduate of Leontios School of Nea Smyrni. He studied at the Medical School of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, pursued postgraduate studies at the National School of Public Health and subsequently earned a PhD in Medicine (Magna cum Laude) by the Faculty of Medicine in the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. He is a surgeon specializing in orthopaedics.

Alongside his studies, he built a notable career in sports, particularly in basketball, playing for teams such as AEK, Panionios, Ionikos, and Apollon Patras, with his participation in the Hellenic National Basketball Team being a particularly distinguished honor.

His political career began in 2006 when he was elected as a Municipal Councilor of the City of Athens. From 2007 to 2010, he served as President of the Organization for Youth and Sports of the Municipality of Athens.

In November 2010, he ran for Regional Governor of Attica in the local elections and emerged as the leader of the major opposition party. That same year, he was appointed Secretary of Sports for the Nea Demokratia political party, and the following year, he was designated as a Deputy Secretary of Program Planning.

The year 2012 marked a milestone in his political career, as he was elected Member of the Hellenic Parliament for the Athens 1st constituency with the Nea Demokratia political party, a position he holds still continuously for the past twelve years. Throughout this period, he has participated in various parliamentary committees, including those on National Defense and Foreign affairs, Public Administration, Public Order and Justice, Social Affairs, and Gender Equality, among others.

In June 2014, he was sworn in as Minister of Public Order for six months, during which he achieved significant progress in combating terrorism.

In 2016, he was appointed as the spokesperson for Nea Demokratia, and in 2017, he assumed the role of Head of the National Defense Sector for the Nea Demokratia political party.,

In July 2019, he was appointed Minister of Health, successfully managing the critical period of the COVID-19 pandemic. During his tenure, he played a key role in strengthening the Greek healthcare system, overseeing the expansion of intensive care units, securing large-scale vaccine procurement and distribution, and implementing public health measures that contributed to controlling the spread of the virus.

In 2021, he was sworn in as Minister of Tourism, serving for two years. During this period, he focused on extending the tourist season, attracting high-value investments, and promoting Greece as a top global destination. His tenure saw record-breaking increases in tourist arrivals and revenues, reinforcing tourism as a key pillar of the Greek economy.

From 2023 until March 2025, he served as Minister for Climate Crisis and Civil Protection, effectively addressing the challenges posed by climate change. Till today, he has implemented major reforms to enhance Greece's preparedness and response mechanism to natural disasters. He has overseen the modernization of the country's civil protection mechanisms, including the expansion of aerial firefighting capabilities and the reinforcement of emergency response teams. Additionally, he has introduced a more proactive approach to disaster prevention, with an emphasis on climate adaptation measures, improved early warning systems, and the coordination of European resources to combat extreme weather events. His leadership has been focused in strengthening Greece's resilience against natural disasters like wildfires, flash floods, and other climate-related crises.

A key project under his leadership is the AEGIS Programme, an ambitious EUR 2,1 billion project fund aimed at upgrading Greece's civil protection mechanism. The programme includes the procurement of state-of-the-art firefighting aircraft, the incorporation of new technologies to emergency response, and the enhancement of disaster preparedness at both the national and local levels. AEGIS focuses on leveraging advanced technology, such as artificial intelligence and real-time monitoring systems, to improve early warning capabilities and crisis response and management. By implementing AEGIS, the Ministry seeks to establish a comprehensive and modern framework for addressing climate-related threats, ensuring preparedness against natural disasters in the years to come by building resilient communities and reducing the human and economic toll of these catastrophic events.

Since March 2025, he is serving as Minister of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy.

His involvement in politics stems from a personal need to contribute with faith, persistence, and seriousness to any effort that can create better conditions for all of us and for future generations. In such a challenging period, we all owe it to ourselves to have an active role in the public matters of our country. It is the least we can do. We have a responsibility and duty towards our children, fellow citizens and our nation.

He is married to Jenny Balatsinou, and they have one son.

**Gregory Ehrie**

Chief Security Officer, Port Authority of New York & New Jersey

Greg Ehrie became the Chief Security Officer of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey in December 2022. Prior to joining the Port Authority, he served as Vice President and Chief Security Officer at the Anti-Defamation League.

Greg spent eight years in the United States Air Force and is a veteran of Desert Storm. He joined the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in 1998, where his career spanned 22 years, and he held multiple national and international positions with an emphasis on intelligence operations and terrorism investigations. Greg also served as Special Agent in Charge of Intelligence at the FBI's New York Field Office, as well as Special Agent in Charge at the FBI's Newark Field Office. He is a graduate of Manhattan College.



### **Julia Nesheiwat**

Distinguished Fellow, Global Energy Center, Atlantic Council

Julia Nesheiwat is a distinguished fellow with the Atlantic Council's Global Energy Center. Since December 2020, she has served as commissioner on the US Arctic Research Commission, reporting to the White House and Congress on domestic and international Arctic issues.

Nesheiwat has more than twenty years of experience of government service. She worked on international energy diplomacy, critical infrastructure protection, defense, environmental science, and national security in the Bush, Obama, and Trump administrations. From July 2019 to February 2020, she served as Florida's first chief resilience officer, launching a new office dedicated to addressing the environmental, physical, and economic impacts of climate and emergency preparedness for the state. From February 2020 to January 2021, Nesheiwat served as the deputy assistant to the president for Homeland Security and Resilience. From 2011 to 2014, she served as deputy assistant secretary of state, where she worked to build the first Energy Resources Bureau at the Department of State. Nesheiwat also served as chief of staff for policy and planning at the Director of National Intelligence, acting and deputy special presidential envoy for hostage affairs, senior advisor to US Special Envoy for Eurasian Energy, as well as the undersecretary for energy, environment, and business.

Nesheiwat served on the World Economic Forum's Global Advisory Council on energy security and was an international affairs fellow with the Council on Foreign Relations. She was also a visiting professor at the Naval Post Graduate School on Energy Security and has lectured at Stanford University and the University of California San Diego. Nesheiwat's PhD dissertation from Tokyo Tech, "Post-Disaster Reconstruction in Energy Policy and Resiliency," focused on post-disaster reconstruction of coastal towns suffering from lack of power, flooding, and rising sea levels. She is a US Army combat veteran.



### **Steven Wills**

Navalist, Center for Maritime Strategy, Navy League of the United States

Dr. Steven Wills currently serves as a Navalist for the Center for Maritime Strategy at the Navy League of the United States. He is an expert in U.S. Navy strategy and policy and U.S. Navy surface warfare programs and platforms.

His research interests include the history of U.S. Navy strategy development over the Cold War and immediate, post-Cold War era, and the history of the post-World War II U.S. Navy surface fleet.

Dr. Wills had a 20-year career as an active-duty U.S. Navy officer and served on a variety of small and medium surface combatants, including an assignment as the executive officer of a mine countermeasures ship. He also held shore-based billets at the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Directorate, NATO Joint Forces Command, Naples, Italy, and the NATO Joint Force Maritime Component Command, also in Naples.

After retiring from the Navy in 2010, he completed a master's and a Ph.D. in History with a concentration on Military History at Ohio University, graduating in 2017. He is the author of "Strategy Shelved: The Collapse of Cold War Naval Strategic Planning," published by Naval Institute Press in July 2021 and, with former Navy Secretary John Lehman, "Where are the Carriers? U.S. National Strategy and the Choices Ahead," published by Foreign Policy Research Institute in August 2021. His articles have appeared in the U.S. Naval War College Review, U.S. Naval Institute News, Real Clear Defense, the Center for International Maritime Security, War on the Rocks, and InformationDissemination.net.

Dr. Wills holds a master's in National Security Studies from the U.S. Naval War College and a bachelor's in History from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.



### **Fanis Papathanasiou**

Senior Diplomatic Correspondent, Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation

Fanis Papathanasiou is an anchor and senior diplomatic correspondent at ERT TV (Greek Public Television) with over twenty-five years of experience in covering significant diplomatic and international events. A longtime correspondent based in New York, he is currently located in Athens and reports on global crises, wars, and various other major news events, including conflicts in Iraq, Lebanon, and other regions of the Middle East.

Throughout his career, Fanis Papathanasiou has conducted exclusive one-on-one interviews with numerous international figures, including Donald Trump, George W. Bush, Secretary Mike Pompeo, Turkish leaders Recep Tayyip Erdoan, Mevlüt avuolu, Ahmet Davutolu, and Abdullah ul, as well as former Israeli Prime Ministers Shimon Peres and Ehud Olmert, former Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin, and IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde, among others. He has also made appearances on global networks such as CGTN, CNN, BBC, and Al Jazeera. Fanis holds a Master of Arts degree in Digital Media, Communication, and Journalism from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.