

Esteemed academics of BC University of Business & Theology,)

Credible ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening,

There are moments in our lives that "carry centuries" because they encapsulate the essence of human existence and the values of an entire journey of a person. Such a moment I experience today, with a feeling of utmost honor and deep gratitude, as I stand before you to accept this exceptional recognition, my appointment as Honorary Doctor of the prestigious American University, BC University of Florida.

The highest honor I receive today is not solely mine but is also a tribute belonging to all who believed in me and supported me throughout my journey: my family, my friends, my colleagues, and of course, you, the academic community of BC University of Business & Theology.

Throughout my professional career in the shipping industry and my academic contributions to maritime studies, as well as in the field of social service through acts of solidarity and contribution to my fellow human beings, I have endeavored to embody the values of leadership, innovation, and empathy. Values that are not merely ideals to achieve but are essential tools for creating a fairer and more sustainable society.

With our meeting today, I hope to share some of the experiences and lessons I have gathered throughout my career and to reflect on the journey of my life, which is a voyage filled with adventures, teachings, and invaluable experiences. From my early voyages on the world's oceans to this day, one thing has remained constant: the belief that through dedication, hard work, and solidarity, we can bring about positive change in ourselves and in society.

My choice to follow the sea as a profession was not just a career path but a calling. My journey at sea was a transition from the anxiety of the unknown to the confidence of self-assurance. With each voyage, with each new port I discovered, I realized that the sea was not just the space where I worked but the teacher who taught me to be a person with values, principles, and dreams. The sea taught me the value of patience, perseverance, and humanity. The sea taught me to have open horizons, to face challenges with courage, and to continually evolve.

From the boundless blue of the sea, my journey led me to the complex world of maritime businesses. The transition from the role of a ship captain to the leadership of a shipping fleet was not just a change of professional title but a profound shift towards new challenges and opportunities. As a senior executive in maritime businesses for the past 24 years and as the Chief Executive Officer of ARCADIA SHIPMANAGEMENT of the Angelopoulos brothers, I have the honor to navigate a company that has reached the pinnacle in the shipping industry through our dedication to quality, excellence in performance, and unwavering commitment to our social responsibility.

The significant donations of ARCADIA to key public institutions such as hospitals, the Church, and the Coast Guard, as well as our immediate response to crises such as the recent fires and the pandemic, are just a few examples of our broader mission to act as responsible entities within society. ARCADIA does not settle for achieving business goals alone but actively shapes strategies with a long-term horizon, focusing on excellence and value creation through targeted actions. At ARCADIA, we prove daily that our success is not only based on the solid foundations of maritime experience and business management but also on our commitment to positively contribute to our society, recognizing the need for a sustainable future.

A significant aspect of my **maritime journey** is my role for 9 consecutive years as the active President of the Green Award Foundation, a prominent and internationally recognized institution based in Rotterdam, which certifies according to international standards "green" ports and ships worldwide, aiming to promote the ecological dimension and sustainability of the maritime sector. My current position in this globally active and impactful non-profit organization is consistent with my professional actions and aligns with my deep convictions about the utmost ethical value of environmental protection from broader factors, especially the looming threat of climate change to humanity.

My presidency from 2015 to date is not only an honorary but also a substantive recognition for me personally, indirectly affirming that Greece continues to excel in the field of maritime. I am very pleased that my presence in the Green Award Foundation has increased the participation of certified companies, led to further expansion of the organization's activities, and contributed to the fact that Greek shipping, besides its leadership on the global stage, also excels in the protection of the marine environment through coordinated efforts, creating one of the strongest ecological profiles in the global shipping industry.

My **academic work** at the University of Piraeus, where for the last four (4) years I have been teaching as a Professor in Practice in the postgraduate programs Management in Shipping, has brought me into contact with students whom I passionately strive to impart my knowledge and experiences to, in a process of mutual development and inspiration. My

efforts aim to equip them not only with technical knowledge but also with the philosophy of continuous pursuit of excellence, to encourage them to step out of their comfort zone, and to support them in becoming the leaders of tomorrow.

I encourage my students to believe in themselves and their abilities, to perceive education as a journey where the destination is self-realization and professional excellence. My goal is to create an environment where students, intellectually, morally, and emotionally empowered, can set high goals for themselves, pursue continuous improvement, and not be afraid to experiment and take risks.

I owe special mention to my excellent academic colleagues for our collaboration, while my sincere thanks belong to the students whom I had the opportunity to teach, supervise, and guide through the completion of their dissertations. Their journey towards success has been and remains a source of inspiration.

Furthermore, my involvement in the establishment of the **Ahepa Maritime Chapter HJ-45 St' Nicholas**, which under my guidance ranked first worldwide, is one of the proudest milestones of my life. My engagement in philanthropic activities throughout Greece, with the contribution of my brothers in the shipping department of AHEPA which I lead, embodies the true definition of human worthiness.

AHEPA worldwide, and the Chapter AHEPA Maritime HJ-45 St' Nicholas specifically, strive to maintain the symbol of Hellenism and the unity across the globe, starting primarily from the heart of our homeland.

As President of the Ahepa Maritime Chapter, I believe that my deepest needs, as well as those of every human being, are fulfilled through the completion of life's meaning, through the sense of active participation, initiative, and self-reliance, as well as the sense of moral satisfaction through contribution and social solidarity. Dimensions that add value to our lives and a new special weight, crystallized in our social footprint.

Confessing my personal principles, I would say that professional recognition, which includes objectively measurable quantities and quantitative parameters, gives us the joy of creation, but in our social work, there is a qualitative, deeper, and truer dimension that is not reflected in statistics and numerical measurements. The aspect of contributing to our fellow human beings through acts of solidarity and support is the completion of our personality because the approval of our actions is given only by the hearts of others.

I always hold in my heart the words of American General Peyton Conway March (1864-1955), who said: "There is a wonderful secret law in nature that dictates that the three things we desire most in our lives, happiness, freedom, and spiritual peace, we attain after we first offer them to someone else." For this reason, I consider generosity among those human emotions and virtues that adorn a person, regardless of the ingratitude of our donation, a common occurrence in human relationships, and without expectations of reciprocation. Its value is greater when performed without loud declarations, arrogance, and superiority, but with simplicity and humility, with silence and spontaneity, as a condensation and crystallization of our existence and spirit.

Continuing the itinerary of my life, I will refer to the **St' Nicholas Business Club**. As the Founder and President of this newly established, prominent Club, housed in an iconic building in the heart of Piraeus, I would unequivocally state that it is a great honor and privilege for me to lead a community of successful and trained professionals who have dedicated their lives to professional and personal excellence, as well as philanthropic work.

The St' Nicholas Business Club represents the coexistence and collaboration between two significant dimensions of our society: Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy. Piraeus, with its rich maritime history and entrepreneurial spirit, is not just a location on the map. It is a symbol of opportunities, innovation, and resilience. Our Club, named after the patron saint of sailors, St. Nicholas, embodies these values as we navigate the dynamic waters of modern entrepreneurship and social responsibility.

In the heart of Piraeus, our members gather to create invaluable connections, share insights from their industries, and explore opportunities for professional and personal development. We are not just a private business club. We are a community of pioneering leaders dedicated to both professional and personal development, as well as to society.

At the St' Nicholas Business Club, our mission is clear: to combine our collective experience, resources, and dedication to create a positive impact on the world. We believe that the success of our businesses is inherently linked to the prosperity of our community, and we

strive to contribute meaningfully through philanthropic initiatives and our participation in society.

Together, we can create a brighter future, where entrepreneurial excellence and social responsibility thrive in absolute harmony. In this journey, we want to have you all by our side. The St' Nicholas Business Club is not just a physical space but also a meeting place of ideas, collaboration, and mutual assistance. And as the fate of each person is unique and distinct, the achievement of common goals is our intoxicating motivation, method, and values our sign, and contribution is the source of our joy.

For the sake of brevity, I omit a detailed reference to my participation in the boards of various international organizations such as the Norwegian Hull Club, Intercargo, Alba Graduate Business School, The American College of Greece, the Hellenic-French Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Dutch Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Advisory Board Member of Piraeus University, etc.

In conclusion, I consider it worth mentioning another area that fascinates me, which is mountaineering, and specifically, the conquest of the peaks of our mountains. Among them is the highest peak in Greece, the incomparable Mount Olympus, which excites me because there I surpass my limits. As the President of the Ahepa Maritime Chapter HJ-45 St' Nicholas, I led the mountaineering team of the Chapter to the summit of Mount Smolikas at 2,918 meters, as well as to the conquest of other peaks that followed, an experience that surpasses every personal goal and constitutes a lifetime achievement.

The journey of conquering Mount Olympus, from the sea to the summit of Smolikas, symbolically reflects for me the need for continuous evolution, contribution, and leadership. Every step, every success, is a lesson that when we move forward together, the possibilities are limitless. Conquering great peaks through mountaineering is not simply a physical achievement; it is a spiritual process that helps us surpass our limits and become stronger. Every step towards the summit, every challenge we overcome, teaches us the value of perseverance, resilience, and self-confidence. Climbing high peaks confronts us with our personal limits and challenges us to surpass them, proving that difficulties can be turned into opportunities for self-improvement.

The experience of mountaineering personally helps me understand the importance of teamwork, adaptability, and mutual respect in facing challenges. Each conquest reminds me that true strength lies in the ability to surpass ourselves, to constantly pursue excellence, and not to be afraid to pursue our dreams. Mountaineering is not just an activity for me. It is a way of life that has taught me that, regardless of the difficulties, we can always reach higher, surpass our limits, and become the best version of ourselves.

Esteemed ladies and gentlemen,

Reflecting on the journey that has brought me here before you, I would like to emphasize that leadership is not just about guiding a company to success or leading philanthropic efforts to fruition. It is about inspiring others to discover their own paths of evolution and growth.

The journey of my life has taught me that true fulfillment comes from lifting others up high and sharing the journey of discovery. Let us continue to sail the seas together, turning challenges into opportunities and dreams into realities. Let each of us be a bright beacon for entrepreneurship, navigation, social solidarity, and Greek heritage, bringing change, hope, and excellence to our world.

Despite the difficulties and crises we are called upon to face in our times, which may momentarily bend us, let us remember the verse of our national poet, Dionysios Solomos, from his work "Free Besieged": "Your strength is the sea, and my will is the rock." Let us draw strength and mental power from our values to fulfill our moral duty: to remain Human. Humans! With consciousness, responsibility, empathy, integrity, and principles. And let us remain Greeks! Greeks proud of our origin and roots, masters of ourselves and our homeland.

In conclusion, I owe heartfelt thanks to the Board of Directors and the President of BC University of Business & Theology, Dr. Vijay Kumar, who is with us today for this honorary

award, and I publicly commit to continue working zealously and devotedly to promote the values and ideals for which you honor me today.

As a Seafarer of the oceans, of business, and of emotions, I express gratitude for my personal Odyssey, which constantly moves towards a new Ithaca of happiness and fulfillment. Thank you for being part of my journey, and I wish you to be eternal travelers in the hearts of people!