

Ministers, Excellencies, Your Reverences, Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. I am delighted to welcome you to the British Residence for the traditional Queen's Birthday Party.

This year, Her Majesty celebrated her 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday. She is already the longest reigning monarch in British history, and for whom the love and admiration of her people – and all around the world – only grows.

And the wonderfully warm reception that her son and Heir, HRH The Prince of Wales and HRH the Duchess of Cornwall received on the visit here last month reflects the respect and affection for the whole British monarchy and royal family which exists more widely.

That visit, just a month ago, also represented and celebrated the enduring value and future potential of our bilateral relationship, which we are also celebrating tonight and which Prime Minister Tsipras' first bilateral visit to London in two weeks time will also strengthen even further.

I and my colleagues are committed to working with you to deepen our collaboration and cooperation in the year to come.

Her Majesty herself already has a place in the pantheon of extraordinary British female monarchs. I will not speculate why, but it is worth noting that some the greatest and most glorious periods in British history were when there were female monarchs on the throne - Elizabeth I, Queen Anne and Queen Victoria.

We must leave to historians the final reckoning of Elizabeth II's reign. But it will certainly be one which spans two of the most epoch making events in our modern history – the end of Empire in the aftermath of WW2, and now, of course, Brexit.

The British monarchy remains, throughout such turbulent times, one of the two central pillars of our constitutional system. It is a source of stability and continuity, and of course sovereignty and power.

But it shares that with the democratic element; our representative democracy and the British parliament.

And at this year's Queen's Birthday party we are celebrating, along with the whole of the UK just last weekend, the centenary of the granting of votes to women – . This was the first step towards affording women equal participation in the democratic process, making Britain a truly representative democracy.

We owe so much to the women of the Suffragette movement which began begun many decades earlier fought - and some giving their lives – for equality between the sexes.

Since then women have more and more taken their place fully in our public, political and economic life, and we are very proud of that record.

Our second woman Prime Minister is now in office is the most obvious demonstration of that in Britain. But there are many other examples.

The United Kingdom's most senior judge is a woman. The Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police is a woman. The Director of the National Crime Agency is a woman. Women serve as England's Chief Fire Officer and Chief Medical Officer. The CBI and the TUC are both headed by women.

In the Scottish Parliament, a female First Minister debates against a female opposition leader. In the National Assembly for Wales, a woman leads the third party. The two largest parties in Northern Ireland are led by women. Our Chief Prosecutor is a woman. As it is the case in Greece. Because here too there has been a parallel transformation.

Women are also leading the way in business. The CEOs of GlaxoSmithKline, of Easyjet and of Virgin Money, the UK's newest high street bank, are women.

As is the case in Greece [– and delighted to see Mrs Dimitriou here tonight]. Because here too there has been a parallel transformation.

Building on the work of Callirhoe Parren to champion feminism in Greece, and the election of Greece's first woman MP Eleni Skoura in 1953, a strong tradition of female leadership has developed in Greece. From Eleni Vlachou and Anna Synodinou to Melina Mercouri, Aleka Papariga, Louka Katseli, Vasso Papandreou, Maria Damanaki, Dora Bakoyianni, Marietta Yannakou, Fofi Yennimata. And I wanted tonight to mention especially Virginia Tsouderou who passed away a few days ago: a emblematic personality, always present and active in Greece's public life.

Today in Greece women are too taking their place in public life: MPs and ministers, academics, judges and public prosecutors, armed and security forces officers; and in business too.

A woman is at the helm of HCAP since last year. The CEOs of some of Greece's leading companies like Pharmathen and Actelion AE, Masoutis and E.I Papadopoulos and Navios Shipping and Neptune Lines are women.

But it's even more important that we celebrate the women who are making their way up in their chose fields and professions, and will be the leaders of the future. We are delighted to have a number of them – and especially from the Hellenic Armed Forces, police and coastguard here with us tonight.

From the United Kingdom's first woman Ambassador in Greece, a special welcome to you all.

Before closing let me spend a moment thanking all our collaborators for tonight's event.

First of all, the Hellenic Parliament Foundation for their fascinating contribution to our display on women's political participation in Greece. Please take time to have a look in the ballroom during the evening or on your way out, together with our material on the story of women's suffrage in the United Kingdom.

Second, thank you to our sponsors Hellenic Lloyds', HSBC, TAP, Dixons Kotsovolos, BP Hellas, ReedSmith, and Shell/Coral; Karoulis SA for the English gin and Scotch whisky you are drinking

tonight, Unibrau for the British beers, and Coca Cola 3E for the soft drinks; AHDB for the quality standard British roast beef; Antonios Ikonomakos for the Severn and Wye Smokery smoked salmon, and Stelios Parliaros for the cake you will enjoy in just a moment.

Third, thank you to our wonderful musicians tonight. Shortly you will hear from the Hirollers Swing Band. And just now we have been enjoying the very talented, and all female, Campion Trio who will now play the National Anthems.

*[Greek national anthem]*

*[UK national anthem]*

Thank you

Ladies and Gentlemen, to conclude the formalities this evening in the traditional way, may I ask you first, to raise your glasses and join me, Ladies and Gentlemen, in toasting His Excellency The President of The Hellenic Republic. *The President.*

I now ask you, in turn, to raise your glasses and join me, Ladies and Gentlemen, in toasting Her Majesty The Queen. *The Queen.*

And finally, because this is first and foremost a birthday party, the cutting of the cake.

Thank you very much, Ladies & Gentlemen. Enjoy the party!