Hard as it might seem, the moment has finally come for us to now be able to speak again of Athens in a visionary and yet absolutely realistic manner. The moment has finally come to let go of the fear and frustration that we all feel, walking around the city; to allow for the emergence of optimism and of those sentiments that will motivate the citizens themselves towards undertaking the most peaceful, creative and productive recapture of Athens. And this is one first major victory for Athenians, for our city, as we now present the winning proposal at the European architectural competition 'Rethink Athens', for the reconstruction of the city center. The jury believes that this proposal has all the features necessary for the dynamic comeback of Athens: It is simple and yet far from simplistic, perfectly feasible, functional, faithful to the spirit of Athens but mainly to its prospects and potential, centered upon the citizens and their needs.

The chance for Athens is here. It now remains to the state, but mainly to all of us, to seize it. Not only for making the center of Athens more visually appealing or more functional. But mostly because the creation of a new center of Athens that will be human and accommodating for development, productivity, interactions and creativity, will greatly contribute to the mending of the city's damaged social fabric. That center can become the common ground that will bind all of us together once more; because a healthy, productive city will lead into a healthy, united, vigorous society. And that is a goal that far surpasses Athens: It is a goal of national importance.

The winning proposal at the Rethink Athens European competition embodies and creates the conditions for us to claim a new reality for our city. Of course, this is not sufficient. We now all need to prove – first and foremost, to ourselves – that we really want, that we really deserve to love Athens again and to be loved back by her. Now is the moment that the Government is called upon to fulfill its commitments. It is the moment that we, the citizens, will exercise pressure and control upon the Government for the implementation of the project, and right after, we will defend the new Athens. The Onassis Foundation, with optimism and with a great sense of duty, funded and organized the competition and all the necessary studies for the final tendering of the project. What we now look forward to ourselves is for the mantle to be passed on to the authorities together with the studies in a few months, so that we will be able to meet again in Athens of 2016, when they will have had everything complete. Not as passers-by, but destined towards the center of the city; because we will want to be there: For working, for creating, for living.

February 27th, 2013.

Anthony Papadimitriou, President of the Board of the Onassis Foundation
Marianna Moschou, Secretary of the Board of the Onassis Foundation