Speech by Mr. Jean-Yves Empereur

Madame Minister and Mister Minister,
Mr. Chancelor,
Permanent secretaries and members of the Academy,
Your Excellence,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends,

The National Center for Social Research team and I, as member of this team, were truly and deeply moved when we were informed that we are awarded the Onassis Foundation Prize.

I would like to extend special thanks to the Onassis Foundation President, who, like me, comes from Alexandria, and this common descent of ours is affecting. We are also greatly honoured by the fact that the Institute and the Onassis Foundation Committee have chosen us next to a man I have highly admired for several decades, Sir John Boardman, whose work we learnt by heart during our preparation for the exams in the French School of Athens. At this point, I would also like to mention my teachers, Mr. François Chamoux, Mr. Jean Bousquet and Mr. Jacques Préau, to whom I owe a lot as they allowed me, a young student at the time, to probe into the knowledge of both the language and the Greek civilization. A student at the French School of Athens can at once perceive the concept of Greek culture, beyond any prior theoretical education they may have received, and as we were repeatedly told in Argos, Delphi, Dilos, Thasos and Cyprus, be able to get into the heart of the scholar not only of the ancient but also of the modern Greek civilization. It was that profound awareness that allowed me to comprehend the Greek civilization of Alexandria, the capital city of Alexander the Great, when I first traveled there about 20 years ago. It is at this place, where the two greatest civilizations of the antiquity, the Greek and the Egyptian, meet, that we bear witness daily to this Alexandrian miracle unveiled gradually under our excavations at Alexandria in Macedonia emerging from under 12 meters, and in all creations and devices in the spectrum of art, science and technology the Hellenistic Era has bequeathed to us.

I would also like to say how touched we are from the fact that this Prize comes from Greece and how much it motivates us to expand and probe into the new discovery of Alexandria, and to disseminate Greek culture from the capital of the Hellenistic World, which bears particular importance for us. Thanks to your moral support and the resources provided with this Prize, I would like to ascertain you that our team will continue working towards the same direction through scientific publishing, movies, websites and the creation of models of Alexandrian monuments, and that we will go to great lengths to attract both an expert and a wider public to the Greek culture in which we have so much faith in.

Thank you.