

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome you to the fifty fourth (54th) CISM World Military Sailing Championship!

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today with all of you and especially with our colleagues from Brazil, France, Denmark, Canada, Spain, Italy, Ukraine, and Poland in their capacity as distinguished athletes in such a unique sport like sailing!

I believe you have already had a warm welcome and a good taste of the traditional Greek hospitality from the personnel of the Hellenic National Defence General Staff Supreme Military Sports Council, which is responsible for the preparation and execution of the World Military Sailing Championship.

As of tomorrow, the Hellenic seas, the seas of the legendary Ulysses, await you to set sail and show your talent, your skills, and your stamina!

They await you to set sail on the waters of the Saronic Gulf, the same waters where the legendary Athenian triremes sailed victoriously two and a half thousand years ago during the Battle of Salamis, saving Athens, Greece, and by extension the entire Western civilisation!

As you are aware, the Hellenic seas, with thousands of islands, countless bays, fair winds, comfortable climate, and crystal clear waters, are one of the best sailing scenes worldwide!

After all, sailing is a sport deeply rooted in Greek tradition, as mentioned by the ancient Greek historian Pausanias, who told us that sailing events have been taking place in Greece since the second (2nd) century BC!

Sailing is in fact a noble and unique sport like no other!

And what makes it unique is the fact that athletes do not compete only with each other, like in other sports. They also have to deal with the elements of nature, the winds and the waves.

They must fight with them, tame them, and use them to their advantage in order to get to their final destination as best they can, crossing the finish line to victory after a tough race!

This is your unique sport, unique like all of you who serve it with passion and commitment, dedicating to it countless hours of practice and preparation!

Dear athletes,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our vision for the fifty fourth (54th) CISM World Military Sailing Championship, held this year in Piraeus, is to constitute a celebration of fair play and noble competition, giving to everyone of you the joy of participation and, to those who trained the hardest and are worthy, the additional joy of victory.

As Chief of the Hellenic National Defence General Staff, I always encourage initiatives that highlight the values and ideals of sports, since the Armed Forces, in addition to their main mission, also aim at reaching out and developing bonds of friendship through such important activities.

I am sure that during the next few days we will have the chance to witness exciting races at sea, with all participants trying their best!

Armed Forces and sports are closely connected and this is why sports are part of all military training programmes worldwide. It is worth noting also that one of the main reasons for the revival of the Olympic Games by Baron Pierre de Coubertin was to improve the physical fitness of French soldiers.

In fact, warriors and athletes have a lot in common, as both of them are characterised by virtues like courage and tenacity, while they also share the goal of victory; the athlete in the arena of his sport; and the warrior in the battlefield.

A victory which when it comes, brings glory and honour to them personally and to their nations!

And it is for that reason, that the privilege of being both athletes and warriors, like you are, is of double value and honour!

Concluding and on the occasion of this Championship, I would like to highlight the paramount role of CISM in the promotion of the spirit of sports in the Armed Forces, along with the strengthening of the bonds among military personnel from numerous countries.

I would also like to thank all organisations supporting the Greek Delegation in this event, and especially the Region of Attica and the Municipality of Piraeus.

With these words, I hereby declare the fifty fourth (54th) CISM World Military Sailing Championship opening!

I wish you fair winds and following seas!

Good luck to all of you!

And again, welcome in Greece!

I wish you a pleasant stay, being confident that you will enjoy both the races and the great Greek hospitality.

Thank you.