



Welcome Address (Athens Presentation, 12/05/2008)
Theodoros Vassilakis,
Chairman of Aegean Airlines

Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is a great honor and pleasure to be standing among so many precious friends and associates on this day, at the official presentation of the "3rd Aegean Airlines ProAm". It is thanks to each and every one of you, our sponsors, that we can offer Greeks an institution worthy of our country's athletic, tourist and developmental progress for the third year in a row.

The "3rd Aegean Airlines ProAm" has now been established as one of the most dynamic international golf tournaments in Europe, with the participation of hundreds of athletes from all over the world. The tournament, which is supported by the Professional Golfers' Associations of Europe, will be held at the "Crete Golf Club" this year as well, in a professional 18-hole golf course covering an area of 720,000 m² and characterized by high-standard infrastructure.

Golf is internationally acknowledged as an exceptional market where tourism is concerned, with 50 million high-income consumers and 32,000 golf courses worldwide. Most golf courses are found in the northern countries of Europe, since the sport is rather popular among the broader public there. Great Britain is a typical example since it ranks first with almost 3,000 golf courses. In Spain, a country with extensive geographical, climatic and cultural resemblance to Greece, the development of the sport is remarkable, featuring 300 courses and more than 300,000 players. "Young" Ireland is a particularly promising example of the sport's prospects since 37,000 children currently practice the sport.

Despite, however, the excellent climatic conditions and unique natural landscapes, there are only 6 golf courses operating in Greece. The Greek Tourism Companies' Association (SETE) underlined – in its study titled "Greek Tourism in 2010 – Strategy and Objectives" – that based on calculations per one million arrivals and in proportion to competitive destinations, Greece should have already numbered 46 golf courses! It is at least a comfort to know that extraordinary investments, such as "Costa Navarino" in Messinia, now approach the phase of completion, thus encouraging us that – even as late as now – steps are being made to the right direction.

It is worth noting that golf courses do not damage the natural environment, nor do they pose any threat to the flora and fauna. On the contrary, they serve as a supplement to the ecosystem of the broader region, offering a biological refuge for animals and facilitating the survival even of species threatened with extinction. Moreover, as regards barren areas, such as Hersonissos, where the Aegean Airlines ProAm will be held, they enrich the natural landscape by creating green zones. As a result, golf courses characterized by integrated environmental planning upon their

construction constitute environment-friendly technical projects and are transformed into good environmental practice models. The "Crete Golf Club" in Hersonissos, Heraklion is a typical example.

In closing, I would like to express my warmest thanks to the most "vital contributors" of the "3rd Aegean Airlines ProAm", our sponsors:

**Costa Navarino,
Alpha Bank,
AutoHellas Hertz,
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Athens International Airport "Eleftherios Venizelos",
Coca Cola – Avra Active Cup,
Vacar S.A. – Saab,
the Municipality of Heraklion,
the Region of Crete,
Vourakis Jewelry Store,
Semeli Winery,
Clinique,
Eurest,
Automotive Solutions LTD,
Greek Radio and Television (ERT),
and Esquire Magazine.**

Thank you once again for your valuable support that provides us with the means to constantly evolve, offering our share to sports, tourism and – above all – Greece's society as a whole.