

Reaching out to the diaspora

PASOK MP Elpida Tsouri was elected the new president of the Committee on Diaspora Hellenism, previously the Committee on Greeks Abroad, on November 10.

Tsouri told she is committed to reaching out to Greeks residing abroad and working hard to find solutions to many of the bureaucratic problems they face when trying to get their Greek citizenship recognised, or when it comes time for their sons to serve in the Greek army.

But probably the biggest and most pressing issue that Tsouri said will gain momentum under Greece's new socialist Pasok leadership is the overseas ballot. Pasok wants to introduce a vote-by-mail system for Greek citizens living abroad to replace the current legislation which requires eligible voters to be physically in Greece in order to cast a ballot.

To accomplish her multiple goals, Tsouri plans on emphasising common Greek values, appealing to the diaspora's sense of national pride, and getting Greeks abroad a vote "soon".

AN: What are your goals as the new head of the committee?

Elpida Tsouri: It is well-known that the prime minister is himself a Greek of the diaspora and is thus particularly sensitive to the problems facing Greeks abroad. We will work systematically to make the committee a functional and effective link between the diaspora and the Greek parliament and with Greece in general. The committee will serve as a platform for con-



Elpida Tsouri is the new president of the Committee on Diaspora Hellenism

tinuous communication and cooperation to create, organise and coordinate a large network of Hellenism, through which we can highlight our values, traditions and culture, as well as draw on knowledge and make the most of opportunities for the benefit of all.

Priorities

What issues are at the top of your agenda?

The ties between Greeks abroad and Greece must be strengthened. This is a difficult challenge, especially if one takes into consideration the third and fourth generation. This is why our committee is obliged to actively contribute to the development of a broader national strategy for the Greek diaspora, in cooperation with all state agencies.

Our priorities include the promotion

of the Greek language, education and culture, as well as the voting rights of the Greeks living abroad. It is through the dissemination of information and use of modern technology that we can reduce the distance and shape proposals that will provide lasting solutions and lay the groundwork for a new beginning.

What do you believe are some of the issues of top concern to Greeks abroad?

The issues that concern the Greek diaspora vary from region to region and from one country to another. In general, they include everyday practical problems related to services provided by Greek embassies and consulates on a wide range of issues, like the recognition of citizenship, taxation, insurance and military service.

One common struggle among Greeks abroad is the need to preserve the national identity of young people who are of Greek origin and to prevent their complete assimilation into the host countries. After all, this is why everyone agrees we need to promote the Greek language, support the Greek schools abroad and develop cultural activities and networking among the Greek youth.

Something to offer

Why is it to Greece's advantage to reach out to Greeks abroad?

The Greek diaspora is without a doubt a national source of capital and a growing source of power for our country. The knowledge and experiences of the Greeks abroad are a major source of wealth.

In an era of globalisation, members of the Greek diaspora are the "world ci-

izens" who have repeatedly demonstrated they can thrive in an environment with strong principles and rules. We need them to confront the multiple challenges of today. They are the best preachers of our values, promotion and visibility, not only for our culture but also for our national issues.

Their active participation in the socioeconomic life of their host country many times serves as a bridge for cooperation and friendly bilateral relations with our country. A global network of Greeks is a cornerstone for a strong and dynamic presence of Greece on the international scene.

Do you foresee any progress on the overseas vote issue?

A first important step for the overseas vote was taken by Pasok in 2001 with the revision of the constitution granting Greeks abroad the right to exercise their right to vote. The next key step is the adoption and implementation of the actual legislation.

Both the government and the prime minister himself have referred to the implementation of a postal vote for Greeks abroad and their substantial participation in national elections to ensure their parliamentary representation under the new electoral law - a law which ensures greater transparency and quality of representative democracy.

We expect developments on the matter soon. In any case, it appears that the government will address the issue with the due responsibility and seriousness. It will steer clear of petty politics, which is a blow to the unity and dignity of all Greeks.

Article from ATHENS NEWS



Chinese New Year to be celebrated in Athens

The Chinese community in Athens will for the first time hold a public event to celebrate the Chinese New Year on this Sunday, February 14, in Athens' Kotzia Square, in front of Athens' City Hall. According to their traditions, we are now entering the year of the Tiger and this will be celebrated with a series of events under the banner "Spring and Harmony: One family, one love". The director of the InterChina Cultural Centre Tonia Luo, who heads the committee organising the festival, held a press conference on Monday at the Foreign Press Association in Athens to present the programme of events, noting that the aim was to "build bridges of friendship" between Greeks and the Chinese. "We hope, through this event, that more Greek friends will be able to learn about China, about its traditions and culture, will be able to enjoy the colour, smells and tastes of China so that the friendship between the two peoples will progress to a deeper level," she said.

Omeros for the Romeos

YES, roses are sometimes on the agenda as February 14 looms, but roses fade. On the other hand a Sunday lunch or dinner at one of the great restaurants in St George could provide memories that will last until ... well, until the next time you visit Omeros on the Beach.

We are referring of course to a special St Valentine's Day menu planned by owner/manager John Omeros at his beachside restaurant at Ramsgate.

Guys, if you will really want to impress that special someone, read on.

It's not compulsory, but you could begin with a glass of champagne French at \$19 or domestic for \$8 while perusing John Omeros' special menu.

The Valentine's Day menu begins with a choice of four entrees followed by four main courses and



Right on the beach: Omeros stalwart Richard Tomlinson shows off a new outdoor setting at Omeros on the Beach. A special St Valentine's Day menu has been planned. Picture: Jane Dyson

three delicious desserts.

The entrees include parcels of blue swimmer crab and smoked salmon,

served with avocado cream or curry tempura prawns with kaffir lime mayonnaise.

omeros
on the beach



Mains include ocean trout fillet with seared scallops and eye fillet steak on mash with steamed vegetables and cabernet sauvignon jus.

Finally, the menu offers a choice of chocolate tart with raspberry sorbet plus mango pannacotta with mango and champagne syrup.

Or you could both choose to enjoy Grand Marnier crepes with vanilla bean custard and fresh berries. The menu costs \$60 for two courses or \$75 for three.

Omeros On The Beach, Cook Park, The Grand Parade, Ramsgate Beach. Bookings: 95295391, omerosonthebeach.com.