

## Greek-American George Tsunis, New U.S. Amb. to Greece

TNH Staff

WASHINGTON, DC – The news of the Senate approval for the appointment of Greek-American businessman George J. Tsunis as the new U.S. Ambassador to Greece has been reported around the world. In addition to the major international news agencies, local media, such as Newsday, the largest newspaper in terms of circulation on Long Island, where the new ambassador is a resident, featured the story with great interest, highlighting the fact that Tsunis spoke Greek before he learned English.

The confirmation vote was held late on March 10 after Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer added Tsunis to the list of nominees being considered, Newsday reported.

Tsunis, 54, is a resident of Matinecock, "learned Greek as his first language as the son of first-generation Greek immigrants, [and] will be the United States' representative to Greece at what he has called 'an all-time high' in the relationships between the two countries," Newsday reported.

"I am honored and humbled by the Senate confirmation," Tsunis, a lawyer and the founder, chairman and CEO of Chartwell Hotels LLC, told Newsday on March 11.

Schumer said in a phone interview that he "added Tsunis to a list of nominees being approved by unanimous consent following the passage of the \$1.6 trillion omnibus spending bill and Ukraine aid," Newsday reported.

"I called him at about 8 o'clock and said, 'It's getting done tonight.' He said, 'Whoa.' He didn't know," Schumer told Newsday, adding that "Schumer said he recommended Tsunis for the post to President Joe Biden,

who tapped Tsunis for the political appointment to the ambassadorial posting in October."

"I pushed hard for him from the beginning because he's the perfect guy to be ambassador to Greece," Schumer told Newsday. "He knows Greek history. He knows the Greek language. And I don't think anyone in America has better ties to the Greek-American community than him."

Tsunis "also won bipartisan support after testifying at his nomination hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, including from Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ), the chairman, and Sen. James Risch (R-ID), the ranking member," Newsday reported, noting that "Tsunis now holds positions and interests in several businesses, associations and public entities, which he will have to set aside as he heads in the next couple of months to his new diplomatic posting."

"Tsunis' ethics agreement with the U.S. government said he would resign from Chartwell Hotels LLC and related entities and real estate limited liability companies, while still receiving passive income from them," Newsday reported, adding that "he also agreed to give up his posts as chairman of the Battery Park City Authority; as a director of the New York Convention Center's Operating Committee, which oversees the Javits Center, and from the executive committee of The Hellenic Initiative."

"Previously, Tsunis served as chairman of NuHealth, also known as the Nassau Health Care Corp., which operates Nassau University Medical Center, the only public hospital in Nassau County," Newsday reported.

Tsunis' parents immigrated to the U.S. from the mountain-

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## Mitsotakis, Erdogan Agree to Play Nice



Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, right, and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan during their meeting in Constantinople on March 13.

Leaders meet in wake of Russian invasion of Ukraine

TNH Staff

The uncertainty of fallout over Russia's invasion of Ukraine led Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan to sit down in Istanbul and agree to ratchet down tension between them.

There was worry in Greece that Erdogan would be emboldened by the world imposing only economic sanctions on Russia and seeing President Vladimir Putin wreak havoc on Ukraine, the Turkish leader having the same expansionist ideas to take Greek islands and sea lanes.

But media reports said the two leaders agreed to set aside differences and avoid a confrontation and would continue with de-escalation and resuming confidence-building measures that have failed – but all bets would be off if one side makes a move.

They talked over lunch at Erdogan's residence and Greek government sources not named said it was a relatively friendly meeting although what specifically was said was kept secret apart from agreeing to keep open lines of communication that had mostly been shut down before.

"Despite the disagreements between Turkey and Greece, it was agreed at the meeting to keep communication channels open and to improve bilateral relations," the Turkish Presidency said in a statement.

"Turkey and Greece have a special responsibility in the European security architecture which has changed with Russia's attack on Ukraine," the statement said, adding that both countries should increase cooperation and "focus on positive agendas" for regional benefits, media reports said, including from the Associated Press, Reuters, and Greece's state-run Athens-Macedonia News Agency AMNA.

Sources not named told Kathimerini that Mitsotakis agreed to holding a Greece-Turkey confidence-building

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## Eyewitness Accounts from Kyiv

By Anna Sarigianni

KYIV – At least two people were killed and 12 others injured when a shell hit a residential building in Kyiv in the early hours of Monday, March 14, as fighting raged around the Ukrainian capital with Russian forces attacking.

It is an eight-story building in the Obolon district in northern Kyiv, which was targeted by Russian forces, resulting in a fire, which was brought under control by the Fire Department.

Greek expatriate Tassos Tsiamis reported to The National

Herald from the scene where the apartment building was completely destroyed, as shown in the shocking images he shared.

"My house is exactly 100 meters from where we are. I'm really shocked. The pictures are scary. There is almost nothing left of the apartment building. The apartment building is destroyed. It is a building that has been almost completely demolished. Fortunately we were in the center and not here. The destruction is really complete," he said, adding that three people had been admitted to hospital

and nine had received first aid on the spot. He also noted that this is one of the most central parts of the Ukrainian capital.

In the early hours of Tuesday, March 15, at least another two people were killed and 40 injured when a shell hit another residential building in Kyiv as Ukrainian forces tried to repel a series of attacks by Russian forces.

The nine-story building in the Svetosena district on the western outskirts of Kyiv was targeted by Russian forces at 4

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## Sunny Vodka Brand Launches Nationally

TNH Staff

LOS ANGELES, CA – Global Brand Equities on March 8 unveiled Sunny Vodka, the newest addition to their successful liquid portfolio, with next generation entrepreneurs, Stas Karanikolaou and Zack Bia. The best friend duo who are recognized for disrupting and running the event scene in Los Angeles and cultural events beyond, are now venturing into the alcohol and spirits arena as Partners and Brand Directors with Sunny Vodka.

Greek-American Stas (Anastasia) Karanikolaou, perhaps best known as Kylie Jenner's best friend, is a model and social media influencer with 9.5 million Instagram followers.

Sunny Vodka is an aspirational brand conceptualized in West Hollywood, capturing the essence of its hometown. The creation of Sunny is a love story built by best friends who simply know what people want to drink and bask in all of life's moments. The brand

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## PM Mitsotakis Marks Sunday of Orthodoxy at the Phanar

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, center right, with His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, center left, after attending a ceremony for Orthodox Christians at the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, March 13. See related story on p. 13.

## Pancreta Bank Acquires the Greek Branches of HSBC

TNH Staff

ATHENS – Pancreta Bank signed an agreement with HSBC Continental Europe (HSBC) in principle for the acquisition of the operations of the Greek branches of HSBC, which practically means that the foundations are being laid for the creation of a new banking pillar in Greece.

The completion of the trans-

action is subject to the approval of the Bank of Greece and the Competition Commission.

According to the terms of the agreement, upon completion of the transaction, it is expected that all assets and liabilities, human resources and the network of 15 HSBC branches in Greece will be transferred to Pancreta Bank SA. A relevant announcement was issued by HSBC Continental Europe.

In the context of the transaction, and as the agreement provides for the retention of HSBC staff, Pancreta has the opportunity to strengthen its potential with new high-level executives and by opening up to markets that until recently had a limited

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## Tackling Climate Change in Greece

By Elena Kefalogianni

Consumerism and the increased use of fossil fuels are some of the biggest drivers of climate change that threatens the future of our planet. As countries struggle for solutions, some have progressed more than others. Greece is one of them.

BloombergNEF (BNEF) in its last analysis on Greece's capability to transform its power system, concluded that the country could become a leader in renewable energy. Specifically, it predicted that by 2030, Greece would lead Europe by moving away from using fossil fuels to sourcing power from new on-shore wind or utility-scale solar.

To motivate more countries to work towards Europe's 2050 goal to become a climate-neu-

tral continent, the European Delegation is looking to recognize the first 100 climate-neutral cities that will lead the way.

Giorgios Sisamakias, the Deputy Mayor of Heraklion, Crete, has made it his goal to make Heraklion one of 100 cities to earn that title and he's been transforming the city ever since.

Sisamakias explains that while switching to renewable energies in cities is important, we also have to control energy consumption. According to the National Academy of Science, energy consumption is divided into four economic sectors: residential, commercial, transportation, and industrial. Among these, transportation and residential consume the most energy in Heraklion.

To combat excessive energy

use, the Heraklion municipality prioritizes lowering transportation emissions by improving public transportation and using electric buses. They are also working on building bike paths that will run through the city despite its difficult architecture.

Sisamakias noted that the municipality has invested in digital transformation to decrease the number of people who will need to drive to places for governmental services.

"Everyone will have access to platforms online and through those platforms, they will also be able to organize environmental activities," he said.

In the future, the municipality of Heraklion is also planning to develop smart parking spaces that will inform people of avail-

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## Greek Owner of DC Eatery on Tragic Crash

By Christodoulos Athanasatos

WASHINGTON, DC – Pete Gouskos, the Greek owner of The Parthenon Restaurant in Northwest Washington, DC, spoke with The National Herald, expressing his sorrow for the tragic accident that took place outside his restaurant, which cost the lives of two unfortunate women and the injury of six other people.

"I have owned this restaurant for 33 years. I cannot describe my feelings. I know the people here, we are like a family. It is touching how many phone calls we received. People come by and leave flowers," said Gouskos, who, like his staff, is trying to deal with the shock.

The clock struck 12:17 PM on Friday, March 11, when the frantic course of an SUV driven by an elderly man began. In an incident that unfolded in seconds, the vehicle exited from a gas station onto Connecticut Avenue and ended up crashing into the Parthenon Restaurant's outdoor seating area. Two women, 76-year-old Jane Bloom and 73-year-old Terese Dudnick Taffer, died tragically, while other guests had to be taken to hospital because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

"I was not here when the accident happened. I was at the dentist and came after ten minutes. I saw a scene reminiscent of... Ukraine. A war scene, police, fire department and people," he said,

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# Digital Futurist Dimitris Dimitriadis Helps Us to 'See' the Future

By Stavroula Tsoutsou

**ATHENS** – We are living through the fourth industrial revolution and every day we experience significant changes in the way the world around us works. Technology is evolving at breakneck speed, businesses are adapting to a new digital age, and human relationships are being directly impacted by developments. If things change so fast in our present, what will happen in the future? Dimitris Dimitriadis, Digital Futurist, and CIO of TheFutureCats, has some answers for us. How does he do it? By studying data and trends, he helps us better understand what awaits us in the future, how our daily lives will be shaped, what will be the even more revolutionary developments in technology, how human relationships may evolve.

**TNH:** What exactly does a digital futurist do? Can he really predict the future, and how?

**Dimitris Dimitriadis:** Although on hearing the word 'futurist' many may imagine predictions and curious, mysterious situations, the digital futurist is nothing less than a person studying scenarios for future, new technologies. He tries to show the world what life can be like in the years to come. A futurist is not one who predicts the future, but one who explores the range of possible future situations that may occur. A futurist will never say that something will happen definitively (forecasting), but rather he will try to reveal, reshape, and possibly overturn basic assumptions we have about the future (foresighting).

**TNH:** We live in an age where technology is evolving at a dizzying pace. What will our professional life and our daily life be like for the next 50 years? What will be the most impressive achievements of technology?

**DD:** Technology was always evolving, but it was happening at a slow, steady pace bringing gradual changes to everyday life, mostly for the better. However, in the [late] 20th century the pace of evolution of technology

– mainly digital – was exponential, drastically influencing and transforming every sector of society.

Already, given the pandemic conditions, the 'work model' has changed. 'Hybrid work' is established in thousands of cases worldwide. In fact, a KPMG survey found that 69% of large companies are cutting back on physical workplaces. Technology catalyzes the union of the natural and the decentralized workplace and this can only benefit us all. And it's not just that. Soon, 7 billion minds will have access to the internet, the knowledge, the products, the services that exist worldwide. And that alone is going to bring about the launch of new technologies... Think of the possibilities we will have when Artificial Intelligence meets Quantum Physics or when Robotics along with Genetic Engineering create robotic equivalents of all human organs.

**TNH:** What will be the biggest challenge due to the technological development that the human community will have to face in the coming years?

**DD:** We will soon be able to redesign our body and brain function, whether it is genetic engineering or connecting our



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF DIMITRIS DIMITRIADIS

Dimitris Dimitriadis during his presentation at TEDxAUEB.

brain directly to a computer, or even creating completely inorganic entities with artificial intelligence that will not rely at all on our organic body and the human brain. These technologies are evolving with incredible speed. We are essentially watching a race to develop artificial intelligence and genetics – which one day could allow parents, for example, to have children that are, for example, smarter or better looking.

This is a challenge that we will face in the coming decades, because for the first time in history we have the opportunity to create a real biological inequality. If these new technologies are only available to the rich or only to people from a particular country, then humanity will be divided into biological castes because of physical and mental differentiation through genetic and artificial intelligence.

**TNH:** How much will tech-

nological development affect human relationships?

**DD:** Many people imagine alienation, however a futurist knows that technology brings us even closer together, having a positive effect on human relationships. A great example is the pandemic, in which technology played a catalytic role, since we all experienced something extraordinary through it. At a time when physical presence seemed unthinkable, it was technology that bridged the gap and brought us closer to our loved ones. We experienced birthdays, love affairs, births, and even deaths from inside a screen. Can you imagine how we would have experienced the pandemic 20 years ago? Can you imagine how many moments we would have lost, how many valuable experiences we would have been deprived of?

**TNH:** In many science fiction movies we see the collision of humans and machines. How likely is such a scenario in the future?

**DD:** Scenarios are just that – scripts! Machines will always evolve, but the goal remains one: to serve man. So, the more we improve and shape a machine, the easier it is to achieve

its optimal utilization to solve problems that today seem unsolvable. The possibilities and perspectives of emerging technologies will give a new dimension to modern reality. But in it man will always have a comparative advantage.

Dimitriadis 'explores' the future and identifies the trends and new technologies that are shaping the world. His mission is to help us understand how society, human relations, and business will work in the future, but for him, human communication is always in focus. With an academic background in marketing and design, he became active in the world of digital marketing before Facebook was even created, and very soon became involved in communication and storytelling. He teaches Digital Marketing Analytics & AI at CITY College, University of York Europe Campus, and is a co-founder of TheFutureCats, an integrated digital marketing agency, and ENSYNaestheti, a volunteering platform that aims to leverage crowdfunding to directly address the needs of homeless people.

More information is available online: <https://www.dimitris-dimitriadis.com/>.



Dimitris Dimitriadis at the European Digital Diplomacy Exchange.



Dimitris Dimitriadis, Digital Futurist.

# Greece's Politicians, Young Leaders Tackle Hot Issue: Climate Change

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able parking spots to minimize the time people search for available spaces. "We are also trying to limit parking spots in the center of the city so that people park further away and use public transportation or walk," said Sisamakias.

He also spoke about the energy-driven renovations on public buildings as well as the addition of sensors that measure the environmental impact on the microclimate of the region.

"We have developed an energy committee with the goal of producing energy with renewable energy resources and educating the people on their benefits," said Sisamakias.

Finally, he touched on one of Greece's biggest sources of income, tourism. "When it comes to tourism, we have reduced the amount of waste by placing taxes on local restaurants and bars based on how much trash they produce," said Sisamakias.

Meanwhile, the General Secretary of the Ministry of Rural Development and Food, Chris-



tiana Kalogirou, spoke about the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) that every European country has adopted to build a relationship between agriculture and society.

Kalogirou explained that in collaboration with other ministries, they're planning to make drastic changes to different areas.

For example, in agriculture,

together with the Ministry for the Environment, Energy, and Climate Change, they are preparing a mutual political agreement that will force farmers to collect all empty plastic packages from pesticides that are left behind.

"We are also working towards decreasing the number of pesticides by providing farms with the latest technology that

will help them determine which areas need pesticides so that they don't pollute all the crops," said Kalogirou.

In the long run, there is also a plan to promote crops that have a positive environmental footprint.

The Ministry of Rural Development and Food is also collaborating with the Ministry of Shipping and Island Policy as

well as with the Laskaridis Foundation to organize efforts to decrease sea pollution and plastic waste.

But it's not just a government effort.

Young leaders around the world are also taking action to secure theirs and the next generations' future. The National Hellenic Student Association (NHSA) of North America, Inc., a non-profit organization representing students and young professionals of Hellenic heritage in the United States and Canada, while promoting Hellenism and mentorship, has also placed sustainability high on its action list.

Personal responsibility and an opportunity to lead by example led Alexander Thomopoulos, NHSA's former president, and his board members at the time, to partner with Kostapanos Miliareis' nonprofit volunteering organization, Ethelon, to be a force for social change. They created a Diaspora initiative to clean a beach in Greece annually and promote sustainable practices and products such as

bamboo toothbrushes and cloth/straw bags.

"After Kostapanos' workshop at NHSA's Atlanta Convention on volunteerism as a grassroots force for change, it got us thinking about how NHSA can play a part. So, we got together to create a multi-organizational initiative to clean a beach in Greece every year," said Thomopoulos.

The first beach clean-up in 2018 was a success with the removal of over 360 kilos of trash from Saronida beach. Since then, the beach clean-up has been established as a yearly event motivating even more volunteers to participate.

This year, the NHSA plans to host the beach clean-up in Heraklion bringing together both government and young leaders' efforts to promote sustainable practices and motivating both locals and the Greek diaspora to play their part.

**Elena Kefalogianni is a freelance writer focusing on gastronomy and the environment.**

# Athena Kasvikis' Behave Bras Picks up \$150K on ABC's Shark Tank

TNH Staff

**NEW YORK** – Athena Kasvikis, the founder of Behave Bras, appeared on ABC's Shark Tank on March 11, pitching her innovative line of wire-free lingerie made for the biggest busts, making an impressive deal for her brand.

Kasvikis, of Greek and Italian

heritage and a native of Greece, NY, struggled for years "trying to ensure that her chest wasn't the most noticeable thing about her," according to the Behave website. "Constant quad-boob, painful discomfort divots, and constant discomfort finally took their toll and she screamed, 'Enough is enough!'"

Finding a bra that fits is chal-

lenging for most women of all sizes and Kasvikis, 39, started Behave because, she found that "for too many years, big bra brands ignored big breasts in the U.S."

"Sick and tired of not being comfortable in her own skin," Kasvikis "wanted something wire-free and supportive... something to prevent chest-

wrinkles from forming while she slept, something pretty enough to feel proud of."

The company's mission is "to help women love their bodies, and their bras, again."

Kasvikis says on the Behave website, "I grew up in a big Greek/Italian family and always felt supported. But I developed a problem. Well, two big prob-

lems to be precise. I developed large breasts at a young age and they wrecked my back, neck and shoulders. I used to have to wear not 1, but 2-3 sports bras just to exercise without major pain!"

In her appearance on Shark Tank, Kasvikis was hoping for an investment deal of \$150,000 for 10% equity. She told the 'Sharks' – Mark Cuban, Barbara Corco-

ran, Kevin O'Leary, Lori Greiner, and Daymond John – that after making "\$110,000 in sales and a low return rate of 12%... the brand had also patented the entire product," MEA WorldWide (MEAW) reported.

Kevin O'Leary "was the first shark to jump in and make her an offer for \$150,000" and "asked for 20% equity in return," MEAW reported, adding that "Athena made a counter for 17%, but the sharks quickly chimed in, noting that negotiating for a mere 3% might cost her the deal."

O'Leary "even mentioned that he was betting on her and investing in her," MEAW reported, noting that Kasvikis "took the offer and made a deal of \$150,000 for 20%."

The fan reaction to the unexpected partnership on social media included posts of Twitter, such as "WOW – I did not see an Athena-Kevin partnership coming!" and "There is some more diversity for @kevinolearytv's portfolio! Congratulations to you and @BehaveBras! #Shark-Tank," MEAW reported.

The Sharks also joined in on Twitter with Barbara Corcoran posting: "That was quick! Cheers to @KevinOlearyTV for being so 'supportive' #SharkTank @ABC-SharkTank #BehaveBras."

# Greek-American Irene Spantopanagos Victim of Tragic Murder-Suicide

TNH Staff

**NEW YORK** – The Greek community in the United States and in Tilos was shocked by the brutal murder of 29-year-old Greek-American Irene Spantopanagos, who has roots on the Dodecanese island.

According to the local media, the tragedy unfolded on March 12 in Massapequa, Long Island, where the unfortunate woman, an only child, lived with her 17-month-old daughter Alessia.

A video from a security camera next door has been circulating on social media in which the voices and cries for help of the 29-year-old are heard, at the time of the attack by her 34-year-old ex-husband, identified as Vincent Maiolica. In the same video, the voice of a 22-year-old woman is also heard, who was also

injured by the alleged perpetrator, according to the media, which noted that she had a relationship with Maiolica, following the end of his marriage with the unfortunate Spantopanagos.

Neighbors who heard the two women calling for help, alerted the police, who arrived in minutes, together with EMTs, and found all three covered in blood.

According to the Nassau County Police Department (NCPD) investigators, the tragic event was a murder-suicide that left Spantopanagos dead and the 22-year-old woman and Maiolica both initially in critical condition. Maiolica later succumbed to his self-inflicted injuries as the NCPD said he was pronounced dead on March 14, Daily Voice reported on March 16. The 22-year-old is still hospitalized, fighting for her life. The motive for the murder-suicide is not



GOFUNDME/ COURTESY OF THE FAMILY

Irene Spantopanagos with her daughter Alessia.