

REMARKS BY LT. GOVERNOR ELENI KOUNALAKIS
CalChamber Consular Corps Reception
The Sutter Club, Sacramento
June 1, 2022

Thank you, Jennifer for that kind introduction. Good evening, everyone, and welcome to Sacramento! What a pleasure it is to be together with you again after a two-year hiatus. And how wonderful it is that the CalChamber and the Sacramento Host Committee are once again able to organize this two-day series of events focused on California's economy and on the critically important role played by those of us engaged in promoting international trade. It is a cherished tradition.

Governor Newsom has asked me to convey to you his most profound regrets at not being able to be with us to personally greet each of you and to tell you just how much we all appreciate your partnership and the work you do on behalf of your nations and people.

As we all know too well, these past two years have been unprecedented. But led by Governor Newsom, in California we faced them with resolve and determination, guided by facts and science. Indeed, many sectors of our economy did suffer significant damage

during the pandemic. But thanks to federal aid packages, innovative support programs here in California, and a positive-minded, can-do spirit, we have weathered the storm and are coming back strong.

Prior to the pandemic California was the fifth largest economy in the world. Last year, with a \$3.35 trillion economy, we still retained that distinction. In 2021, we sold products and goods to customers in 225 countries and territories around the globe. On the foreign direct investment front, even though the latest figures show that 2020 saw a drop in the number of jobs supported by foreign-owned companies, they still employed over 700,000 Californians and contributed more than \$64 billion in wages to our economy. We are proud to say that more manufacturing jobs are supported by foreign owned entities here in California than in any other state.

Throughout the pandemic our international relationships have remained key to our economic survival and recovery. Working with many of you, we did not allow the pandemic to interfere with meaningful and productive interactions. In fact, despite our inability to travel we actually found ourselves engaging in more international meetings and events, rather than fewer, thanks to the adoption of new technologies that allow for virtual interactions. Last year, I was

involved in over 25 meetings at the Ministerial or Gubernatorial level, and our office participated in over 60 meetings at the Ambassadorial or Consul General level.

Most of those engagements took place on computer or video screens. Utilizing the latest in green-screen technology, we even held a virtual “meeting” under the Golden Gate Bridge with the Crown Prince of Norway. We also held a virtual mini-summit with Israel, and we signed new MOUs with partners in Denmark, Japan, and Armenia.

Once travel began to resume and we were able to begin meeting in person again, we hosted a visit to the Bay Area by Ukraine’s President Zelenskyy last September. His visit highlighted the close partnership California’s National Guard has enjoyed with the Ukrainian military since 1993, a relationship that has become all the more important given the unprovoked, illegal, and inhumane invasion of Ukraine by Russia. Consul General Kushneruk, I want you to know that all of us here in California will continue to do whatever we can to support the courageous and inspiring struggle your people are engaged in to protect Ukraine’s freedom, sovereignty, and democratic way of life.

We recently hosted the Ambassador of Japan, who signed a new Memorandum of Cooperation with Governor Newsom. I traveled to San Diego to participate in events marking the construction of a new high-tech land port-of-entry on the busiest border in the western hemisphere. I led a California delegation to the COP26 United Nations Climate Convention where we signed the Edinburgh Declaration, further cementing our leadership role in the fight against climate change. And just last week, the Prime Minister of New Zealand visited San Francisco, where she and Governor Newsom witnessed the signing of another climate-related international Memorandum of Cooperation. Next week, the Summit of the Americas will take place in Los Angeles, where we will welcome to California heads of state from across the Americas.

So, in spite of the pandemic, we have not missed a beat when it comes to our international contacts and agenda. None of this would be possible without the ongoing support that each of you gives every day to the promotion of international relations and understanding. It is your enthusiasm, your initiative, your professionalism, and your dedication to bringing people closer together and to bridging the divides that separate us that make California, and the world, a better, more prosperous place.

Thank you again for all you are doing. Thank you for taking the time out of your very busy schedules to travel to Sacramento. Thank you for being part of this wonderful tradition. And thanks again to the California Chamber of Commerce and the Host Committee for bringing us together. Enjoy the remainder of the evening. I look forward to seeing all of you tomorrow morning at the Host Breakfast!