

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Press Center



Remarks by Treasury Secretary Jacob J. Lew at Joint Press Conference with Greek Finance Minister Euclid Tsakalotos

7/21/2016

ATHENS – I would like to thank both Prime Minister Tsipras and Minister Tsakalotos for hosting me in Athens today.

Over the last year, Greece has made significant progress in meeting important reform commitments, which has helped stabilize the economy and reduce uncertainty. I was encouraged to see Greece and the creditor institutions reach a successful conclusion to the first program review in May. It was also encouraging to see recent growth forecasts come in above expectations, a sign that a better future lies ahead for Greece.

I am aware of how challenging it has been to pass the necessary reforms to put the Greek pension system on a sustainable path and to take steps to begin tackling the non-performing loans that burden Greek banks, and I recognize the tremendous efforts that the Greek government has made to date, especially considering the challenging external environment.

It is important as we look toward the remainder of the summer and the fall that Greece continue to implement the measures that have already been passed and make headway on the next set of milestones due in October, including by following through on privatization plans and moving forward with critical financial sector reforms.

I believe that rapid progress on pro-business reforms – including the privatization program and structural reforms in product and service markets – could pave the way to a positive cycle that reinforces growth and investment.

Progress on reforms is also important so that soon European leaders can begin discussing with the IMF the timing and details of debt relief, which the Eurogroup committed to in May. Putting Greece's debt on a sustainable path is critical to Greece's long-term economic health and I encourage all parties to be flexible to successfully conclude this fall's negotiations.

Last week I had the opportunity to meet with my counterparts and business leaders in Paris, Berlin, London, and Brussels to discuss the period of change following the UK referendum. I reinforced during those meetings that the United States remains committed to working with our UK and EU counterparts as they work through this transition, to ensure continued economic stability, and advance shared economic growth and prosperity in Europe and around the world.

An outcome from the UK and EU that produces a highly integrated relationship between the two is in the best interests of Europe, the United States and the global economy.

I will depart Athens this evening for the G-20 in Chengdu, China. The meetings in Chengdu come at a moment of continued uncertainty in the global outlook, making it important to redouble efforts to use all policy tools – including monetary, fiscal, and structural – to boost shared growth. The global outlook also underscores our focus on the commitment made at the last G-20 in Shanghai to consult closely with one another on exchange rate policy, and to refrain from competitive devaluation. We have seen progress in this regard since the last G-20 meeting, and we will continue to encourage the use of the full range of policy tools to promote shared, sustainable growth.

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