

## **SNF Co-President Andreas Dracopoulos's opening remarks at the SNF Global Center for Child and Adolescent Mental Health summit on youth mental health in New York**

Thank you very much to Harold, a visionary leader in the field and a great friend for over a quarter-century. We at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) are enormously proud of our collaboration with Harold and the Child Mind Institute—an amazing collaboration in which we provide support, and the Child Mind Institute does all the hard work.

On behalf of SNF, a very warm welcome to all. We are thrilled to see so many organizations represented here today, constituting a wealth of experience and expertise that portends fascinating conversation.

Our broad-by-design mission at SNF is to always put “humanity at the core,” but to know how to do this in practice, we listen to a wide variety of perspectives, and none inspire us more than the ideas and opinions of young people like those joining us here today. A Youth Advisory Committee, for instance, is at the heart of our planning to celebrate our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary and 3,000+ wonderful grantee-partners in Athens in June 2026.

The advantage of having been around for 30 years—and I don’t mind sharing in strict confidence that some of us here have been around for more than 30 years—is having seen that seismic shifts in areas like today’s mental health topic, ‘our relationship with technology’, are possible. When SNF started, we conducted business extensively by fax. How many of you have used a fax machine recently?

I mention this as an encouraging indication that change is possible. The technological landscape you have come of age with may seem immutable, but that is how it feels at any given point. If you are not entirely happy with the role digital technology plays in your life or how it affects your mental health, it can be changed.

Will it be easy? No, because it is a collective problem and you will be up against forces working at the same time to monetize your attention. But we cannot let technology boss us around. It should exist as a means and not an end in itself.

While COVID in many ways exacerbated the fraught relationship between technology and our mental health, it did lead to one good outcome (aside from getting to wear sweatpants 24/7): the realization that, “Houston, we have a problem” (or in this case, more accurately, “World, we have a problem”). To solve a problem, you must first realize you have it, but that alone is not enough. We as a society are just at the beginning of the road to solutions, which will require finding the resources, finding the human capital, connecting the dots between disparate efforts and fields. This will be a marathon, not a sprint.

Which brings us to why we, as SNF, are here today. The SNF Global Center is the culmination of our quarter-century journey with the Child Mind Institute, crystallized in recent years through SNF’s Global Health Initiative (GHI), our ongoing billion-dollar-plus initiative to increase access to quality physical and mental health care. In 2021, as part of this initiative, SNF helped launch

the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Initiative in Greece, a collaborative effort to support health professionals across the country with an aim of enhancing prevention and treatment for young people. Making sure those young people have a seat at the table when services are designed has been key to its success.

The following year, building on the foundation the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Initiative had laid in Greece and aiming to scale the positive impact we saw it having, the SNF Global Center for Child and Adolescent Mental Health was established at the Child Mind Institute here in New York. It shares with the Greece-specific initiative a focus on supporting system-wide change, always informed by local contexts, by empowering youth and collaborating with, rather than overriding, existing mental health resources.

This gathering encapsulates its way of working: bringing together a wide variety of perspectives, making sure young people's voices are not only heard but listened to, and keeping our shared humanity always at the center. I will leave you, then, with one final thought: the need to take care of the caregivers too.

We look forward to hearing the invaluable insights that will be shared during the course of the day. And if you think of anything else to share later, you can, as it turns out, still send us a fax.

Thank you.