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GREECE



STATEMENT IN THE PLENARY OF THE 17TH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Delivered by H.E. Mr. George Papakonstantinou, Minister for Environment, Energy and Climate Change of the Hellenic Republic

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Thank you Madame President

Madame President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you Madame President and through you the people of South Africa for hosting this Conference and for the warm hospitality you have extended to us.

Every year Madame President, countries take this podium and try to highlight their concerns, special circumstances, needs, achievements, fears, hopes, desires and visions.

A year has gone since Cancun by and as we meet again, here in beautiful Durban, we are facing even more dire circumstances: environmental, financial and social.

The economic depression is now affecting everyone, leading some into recession and others to substantially reduced growth. Social unrest has increased even in the most economically advanced countries.

As most of you may be aware, for the last few months Greece has been on the forefront of this avalanche. We have been fighting to reverse our precarious state finances while trying to juggle the support of the increasing numbers of our citizens in need, and the necessity to boost growth in a hostile environment of increased competition, limited financial liquidity and reduced demand.

There are clear similarities between our national circumstances and the state of the climate and these negotiations.

- We borrowed beyond our capacity to service our debts. We globally continue to emit at rates that are clearly beyond the capacity the earth's environment can deal with
- We did not have a system in place to provide a clear picture of the economic parameters until it was too late. Globally we still do not have a robust global MRV system in place to track emissions
- We reacted with measures that proved insufficient to convince that we are addressing the crux of the problem. We globally put forth pledges that by everybody's estimation are inadequate to meet the 2°C target let alone the 1.5°C one.
- We saddled our children with our debts. We globally borrow atmospheric space from future generations.

- We squandered resources in unproductive ways. Globally, we spend a large amount of funds and effort in these negotiations with very little progress to show.

In this respect, maybe the time has come to limit the duration of the COPs and the SBs to one week and decide that its venue will be in existing facilities, in Geneva or Bonn for example and use the savings that will accrue where they can really do some good.

- Some in Greece have been reluctant to sign a binding commitment to adhere to the conditions that may provide a viable future. Some globally are reluctant to sign binding commitments to reduce emissions. and protect the environment.

Our problems looked local and seemed to require a local solution. They proved systemic and widespread, affecting many others as well, finally requiring multilateral action. The same holds for climate change which affects us all, will do more so in the future, and requires involvement and contribution by all.

At this moment

Madame President

in Greece, we are at a critical juncture. We need to mitigate our shortcomings now or pay a much higher price later. To accelerate things we need to follow a plan, a roadmap, to show us the way.

For Greece, the roadmap points to green growth.

Its milestones include among others:

- a determined push to change our energy mix
- energy conservation through renovation of housing stock
- greening of our transport system including shipping on a global scale and a fair basis
- an efficient but sustainable agriculture
- legally binding coverage of 40% by 2020 and over 90% of electricity by 2050 from RES with corresponding reductions in emissions

The milestones include cooperative projects to further develop renewable energy including Helios a 10GW solar photovoltaic development to generate electricity in Greece for export to northern Europe.

In this climate change process also, Madame President, we are at a critical point and we need a roadmap,

A roadmap for all, a roadmap that is robust, that we can rely on, that would lead to a legally binding agreement, that will enable us to bridge the gap, that will allow us to go faster.

Let us hope, that with your guidance, we will get it here.

Thank you Madame President.