

Mr. President,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to be here today and I would like to express our appreciation for Fiji's distinctive leadership as the first small island state to chair a COP. I would also like to thank the German Government for their excellent hospitality.

The Paris Agreement on climate change was a historic achievement and is the basis for strengthening collective, global action against climate change. Global climate action is what we need for international security and for accelerating the transition to a low carbon economy which, in turn, will bring sustainable and climate-resilient societies.

We welcome and endorse Fiji's vision for the COP23. Big ideas indeed can start from small places. We have to advance the work of the UNFCCC and preserve the multilateral consensus for decisive action to address the underlying causes of climate change, based on the sound scientific evidence base that we have.

Additionally, to advance the Paris Agreement, we must ensure progress on the implementation guidelines and assist all the COP Presidencies in designing the process for the Facilitative Dialogue in 2018.

We hope that during COP23, progress on all the provisions of the agreement is based on a balanced approach. This approach should address both mitigation and adaptation, means of implementation and the transparency framework as a core element to ensure the effectiveness of the Paris Agreement. In this respect, we are grateful to France for its strong determination to maintain the spirit and dynamism of the Paris Agreement.

With regard to mitigation, Greece and the European Union are already meeting their obligations under the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. We will, most probably, overachieve the 20% emission reduction target for 2020 compared to 1990.

Furthermore, according to our EU Nationally Determined Contribution commitments, we are preparing for the second climate target, that is to domestically reduce greenhouse-gas emissions by 40% in 2030.

To that end, the Greek government is promoting circular economy, renewable energy sources, as well as the improvement of energy efficiency in public and private buildings.

Apart from mitigation, we should be equally focused on adaptation issues. Over the last few months we have witnessed extreme weather events on a global scale. These events, aggravated by climate change, sadly caused numerous deaths and resulted in extremely significant damage to infrastructure and ecosystems.

Climate change is expected to intensify natural disasters and may generate migration waves, as local livelihoods in vulnerable areas are destroyed. Greece and Europe are already facing refugee and migration waves with serious social and economic consequences.

We need immediately to deal with this issue in a proactive way. Therefore, we underline the importance of the Task Force on Displacement and we eagerly await their recommendations for an integrated approach to avert, minimize and address displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change.

Given the projections for the climate change impacts in the Mediterranean region, climate adaptation is becoming a national priority for our country. In that respect after formally adopting our National Adaptation Strategy, all Greek Regions are working to prepare detailed regional adaptation action plans. Moreover, cooperation in the Mediterranean on that subject is promoted at a high political level, between Greece, Cyprus and Israel and between Greece, Cyprus and Egypt.

Greece, together with the other EU member-states, has a vision to transform our societies into climate-safe, energy efficient and low-carbon economies which are expected to boost also the economy and create green jobs, both within our countries and in other regions of the world.

Let's not forget, Economy and Ecology, both words of Greek origin (Οικονομία & Οικολογία), are not contradicting each other, instead, they lead to sustainable development to the benefit of all, both societies and environment.

I would like to conclude by inviting all Parties to work together productively for an effective outcome, under the agreed work programme, and pave the way for a successful facilitative dialogue in Katowice next year.

Thank you