

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

STATEMENT

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The spirit of Rio has led us, via Berlin, to Kyoto.

In 1992, in Rio the world gathered to assess the worrying signals of man's detrimental effects on the world's climate. The signals that the scientific community has been sending us since, have erased the doubts of most of us about the need of strong and urgent action.

The negotiations are now at the final stage where both opportunities for agreement and dangers of confrontation arise. We want to stress our belief that we need to leave the beautiful, ancient and very hospitable city of Kyoto with a protocol that is effective, functional and fair in balancing the interests of the many and varied groups involved in these negotiations. In this, the desire expressed by all countries to engage in a meaningful and long-term process should be the guiding principle. It should also provide for future action past 2010.

Greece, as a member-state of the European Union, intends to do its full share to address this problem of climate change. By joining the protocol, it commits itself to reducing its emissions by over 20% by the most conservative and by over 50% by some other internationally conducted estimates, of what they would be if no measures were put in place.

This intensity of effort is at a par or even higher than most other developed countries including some with substantially larger resources.

Greece is a small Mediterranean country with thousands of islands but with very limited coal and oil resources and with abundant sunshine and excellent wind potential.

Its efforts to meet its obligations focus, first, on the development of its renewable energy potential, second, on increasing the effort for efficient use of energy in housing, transport and industry even though its levels of consumption are relatively low, and third and most important, on efforts to increase the level of consciousness of its citizens to the need to change the pattern of their behavior towards one that respects the environment and embraces sustainable development.

In our view, the protection of the environment is not an obstacle to development but rather a challenge to switch to the many available synergetic actions that accomplish both.

To that effect, it has passed legislation to facilitate actions and committed resources despite conflicting demands from other sectors.

Greece is a small country but with very long history and would be difficult for it to claim that it could play here a protagonist's role in international development.

But it can definitely remind everybody that a civilization is in harmony with God's creations when it lasts centuries and millennia rather than decades.

I do not believe that today, here in Kyoto, there are many that can show conclusively that the current form of civilization with its major emphasis on speed in transportation, telecommunications and production of goods, with driving force a competition that is often unchecked and unfulfilling, is the most promising way to an uninterrupted, self-respecting and durable evolution.

Nobody can show convincingly that the way we plan our production and consumption is such that will insure our delivering to the next generations, the earth, the water and the air in a less polluted condition than our fathers gave them to us.

Yet it is encouraging that in both our mind and heart, the worry, even the agony, about our planet's future has taken root. But it is also certain that it is very difficult to change habits and behavior.

But this we must do by returning to our countries, not by our sleek airplanes but by mental wooden ships, carrying in our luggage the best possible international agreement for the benefit of the environment rather than carrying in our hearts the uncertainty of our future.

In Kyoto, near the turn of the millennium, we are given a chance, especially to the more powerful amongst us, to turn the page and say:

No to change of climate

Yes to change of politics that affect climate

Let us do it together for the world and the future of the generations to come.