

**Intervention of
Prof. Michael Scoullos
on behalf of
The Government of Greece,
Hellenic Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change**

**UN Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20
21 June 2012, Roundtable 3**

Madame Co-Chair,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates

Greece has participated actively and has undertaken successful international initiatives of regional importance, even disproportionate to her size, for the promotion of sustainable development since Rio '92, and recently for the Rio+20 process. Overall, we acknowledge the progress achieved in Rio+20, however, we are firmly convinced that much more should have been achieved, as both Ms. Robinson and the representatives of the Civil Society have also stressed.

The launching of **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) is a promising concept. SDGs should be fully integrated in and coherent with the post-2015 Development Agenda, without of course deviating efforts from the achievement of MDGs by 2015. 2015 is just around the corner, and we should be speeding up the process, if the general emphasis on implementation is a real concern. It will be a challenge defining SDGs that will cover adequately all three dimensions of Sustainable Development as well as their inter-linkages and cross-cutting issues. At the same time, we have to ensure that the SDGs will be concrete, feasible, and measurable, monitored by indicators, suitable to assess and communicate progress. Greece would have liked to have a much faster process for their definition and endorsement and not just initiating a new intergovernmental process under the General Assembly for the establishment of a working group that will have to first decide on its modalities etc. Moreover, we would have liked the inclusion in the outcome document of an indicative list of mature themes (such as water, energy, resource efficiency, oceans, social issues etc) that could guide the process, without of course pre-empting the outcome of the MDGs review in 2013.

Reaffirmation of the right to **Water** and sanitation as well as the recognition of integrated water resources management as central for sustainable development, are very important elements of the Outcome Document. Greece believes that the indispensable role of water in achieving green growth should become more prominent. However, in a 'shrinking world' of global economy, the omission of clear reference to transboundary water is a profound weakness of the Outcome Document. Of course, we do recognize that the existing terminology referring to the implementation of IWRM "at all levels" covers also the transboundary level. Greece, being primarily a downstream country, has keen interest and transferable experience on related issues. Greece is a long term driver of regional cooperation on transboundary water management including through the Mediterranean

Component of the EU Water Initiative and the Joint Athens Declaration / Petersberg Process, in cooperation with Germany and the World Bank, since 2003, and technically facilitated by the Global Water Partnership-Mediterranean. Since there should clearly be an SDG on water, Greece is ready and willing to contribute by sharing its experience.

Regarding **Oceans**, we recognise that Rio+20 has made a definite progress. We would have liked to see, however, in the text a much more firm language and commitment to initiate, as soon as possible and without the risk of losing the momentum, the negotiation for an Implementation Agreement under UNCLOS, which celebrates this year its 30th anniversary, for the protection and sustainable management of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. This has been a key priority for Greece, for the EU as a whole, as well as a key demand of civil society; it would have been a very important success of the conference. However, the decision finally taken on the matter, as contained in the outcome document, is indeed undoubtedly positive. For us this is not an end point, but the beginning of a transition process towards an efficient green-blue economy.

Regarding **Education**, the Outcome Document reflects to a certain extent the importance Greece places on the matter as a prerequisite for sustainable development. Greece at the moment supports the development of the Mediterranean Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), to be adopted within the UN Decade for ESD (UNDESD). Provisions for the effective expansion of the Decade's impact need to be put in place soon.

As acknowledged in several parts of the Outcome Document, **Civil society** is a critical partner in making things happen at local, national, regional, transboundary and global level. However, this notion has to be further strengthened. We need to capitalize on progress made in several regions such as in the Mediterranean where, despite long standing obstacles and current turmoil, civil society organizations and networks have managed to reflect reasonably well the voice of the citizens and stakeholders. Further coordination with and substantial support to the civil society for meaningful participation will assist the implementation of the Outcome Document.

Capacity Building is key for the implementation of the Rio outcomes. A range of related initiatives have been undertaken by various institutions, governments and organizations with varying results. The promising outcomes of the Horizon 2020 Initiative/ Capacity Building Programme in the Mediterranean supported by the European Union allows for its methodology to be replicated in other cases.

Madame Co-Chair,

Greece, despite, or rather because, of the current difficult period has placed a lot of hope in green economy and natural resources efficiency, which, however, in order to be coherent and effective should be paralleled by progress in measuring growth through indicators beyond GDP. Greece is committed and ready, as always, to support the international community efforts to jointly meet challenges and obtain sustainable development for the benefit of the current and future generations.

Thank you for your attention.