

# BIOPOLITICS INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION

## HELLENIC CHAPTER OF THE CLUB OF ROME



### *Biopolicy and Biodiplomacy for International Water Cooperation*

**Athens Money Show**  
Hilton Athens, 21 December 2012

#### **PRESS RELEASE**

As climate change gets more serious and more harmful, it becomes obvious that the protection and management of natural resources requires first and foremost a deeper and effective integration of strategies in water protection. The United Nations declared 2013 as the International Year for Water Cooperation. In reflection of this declaration, the **Biopolitics International Organisation (B.I.O.)** and the **Hellenic Chapter of the Club of Rome** held a joint event in the framework of the Athens Money Show, at Hilton Athens, on Friday, **December 21, 2012**. The event convened a panel of distinguished speakers, who discussed biopolicy and biodiplomacy as decisive elements in international water management and cooperation.

Discussions were chaired by Prof. **Agni Vlavianos Arvanitis**, President and Founder of the Biopolitics International Organisation and of the Hellenic Chapter of the Club of Rome. Prof. Vlavianos Arvanitis stressed the need for an international strategy with a vision as an urgent priority in overcoming water challenges. “The promotion of understanding among nations in favour of water cooperation initiatives, including culture and education, can contribute towards a new and stronger agenda in water management and lead to resources that are truly sustainable. Just as all parts of the human body need to function together in harmonious coordination to maintain a healthy individual, modern society desperately needs a common vision to secure a peaceful future. Biodiplomacy focuses on the interdependence of all forms of life and supports efforts to maintain biological and cultural diversity. To meet today’s escalating transboundary environmental challenges, we need to set respect for bios – all life on our planet – as a priority in decision-making. This requires policy and leadership with a vision. One that focuses on curbing unemployment, eradicating poverty, protecting biodiversity, and promoting clean technology and energy, education, international cooperation and intercultural dialogue. Time is of essence, and today’s challenges demand the participation of every citizen.”



## International Policy for Water Diplomacy



**Dionysia–Theodora Avgerinopoulou**, President of the Special Permanent Committee on Environmental Protection of the Hellenic Parliament, opened the first session on International Policy for Water Diplomacy. She presented the issue of water as one of the highest priorities for Greece and the global agenda, suggesting that countries need to find new ways for diplomacy to solve the problems arising from water conflicts. She underlined the need for global instruments and international cooperation for water management by stressing that “to meet the challenge of the successful implementation of international and national legislation, the Greek Parliament has established relevant fora, such as bilateral committees of friendship between Greece and other countries. Given that the new EU program for water management starts in 2014, Greece will try to focus on renewable energy, green buildings and water management.”

The Ambassador of Ukraine, **Volodymyr Shkurov**, spoke about the international importance of the “Water for Life Decade” and presented some of Ukraine’s national water strategies. “Ukraine has launched a number of initiatives for the improvement of water consumption systems and the preservation of water resources, as well as local infrastructure that ensures access to a better water quality. One of the most important national projects is a program themed ‘Quality Water.’ As a part of the Danube region, which is a key European waterway, Ukraine is eager to establish cooperative measures with neighboring countries aiming at the development of common comprehensive water policies.”



The Ambassador of Mexico, **Tarcisio Navarrete Montes de Oca**, emphasized the fact that humankind has lost the ancestral wisdom of our harmonious coexistence with nature. He stressed that “water demand has risen by more than 600% in the last 100 years, leading to serious problems of pollution and deterioration of the natural environment. Mexico has deemed water to be a matter of national security. In the effort to create a culture of respect for water, Mexico held the 4<sup>th</sup> Water Forum in 2006, one of the most important tools for solving water related problems. Mexico also actively takes part in various multilateral fora, such as the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol, and the G-20 Mexico Summit.

## Saving the Aral Sea – Sustainable Water Resource Management in Central Asia

**Rakhmatulla Nurimbetov**, Head of Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan, addressed the irreparable damage that the Aral Sea has been suffering for the past 40 years. He spoke about the controversial dam projects in Central Asia and why Uzbekistan opposes the implementation of the new hydropower plants in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. He pointed out that the transboundary rivers Amudarya and Syrdarya are on the brink of ecological disaster due to the construction of hydroelectric facilities, leaving interstate cooperation as the only viable option for the development and achievement of mutually acceptable solutions.



The Chief Expert of the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan, **Avaz Khudayberdiev**, presented the transboundary environmental problems in Central Asia and the need to stabilize the ecological situation in the Aral Sea area. He emphasized that countries located in the rivers' upstream are using transboundary waters in a manner that contradicts internationally accepted norms and principles, leading to crises like the case of the Aral Sea destruction.



### **Biopolicy Priorities and Water Resources**



During the third session, **Vicky Tzatzaki**, Legal Consultant to the Special Secretary for Water at the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, emphasized the need for water conservation for present and future generations. Ms. Tzatzaki pointed out that integrated water resources management is the key methodological tool applied through the implementation of EU Directives (Water Framework Directive, Floods Directive, Marine Strategy Directive etc.) and United Nations Conventions (UN Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses, Ramsar Convention, Convention on Biodiversity etc.).



**Michael Scouffos**, Professor of Environmental and Marine Chemistry at the University of Athens and Chairman of the Global Water Partnership – Mediterranean, discussed the latest developments in international and mediterranean transboundary water issues and highlighted major steps in international environmental frameworks developed in the last decade. “A number of important global and regional frameworks for the promotion of collaboration in transboundary water issues have been developed in the last decade. However, some of them have become operational only recently. Though water has the potential to fuel wider conflict, it can also act as a bridge for cooperation. Sharing benefits in a sustainable way shall become the major driving force for preventing or solving eventual conflict.

Hydrodiplomacy backed by science and an in depth understanding of political and socio-economic conditions, is a key tool towards this direction.”

**George Stournaras**, Professor of Hydrogeology and Engineering Geology at the University of Athens, addressed water and environmental policy issues and explored the environment and water dynamic relations such as land uses, natural resources, waste disposal, population and non sanitary installations. He also presented several global water consumption predictions and urged for national and international considerations for rational water management in view of the irreversible water shortage. Finally, he stressed that, in the international context, collaboration, synergies and policy decisions should be based on the value not of an equal, but of a fair water distribution and use.



**George Kazantzopoulos**, Sustainable Development Consultant and Managing Partner of Global Challenges, drew attention to the concept of the water footprint and the lack of concrete methodologies in international water management. He claimed that the measurement of the water footprint is a basic prerequisite for a comprehensive water management with the ultimate objective to reduce water consumption. Policy and technology have to be both innovative and resolve not only technical but also social issues. Perceiving the right to fresh water as an ethical principal, he praised the efforts of the Biopolitics International Organisation to promote water issues at the national and international level. Mr. Kazantzopoulos concluded his presentation by conveying the message that “every drop of water counts.”



The session concluded with Prof. **Christos Efthymiopoulos** from the Center for Astronomy and Applied Mathematics at the Academy of Athens, who focused on the need to understand the water systems in depth and to incorporate this understanding into the education of decision makers. “The importance of researching and approaching water issues with some self reservation and with some understanding of our present ignorance of what is happening to all the scales of the water systems is vital. The spirit of Biopolitics is an inspiration to people and a means for introducing respect for bios in the value system of every one of us. The key is to understand that if we build this value and educational system, biodiplomacy will eventually succeed.”

An open discussion and comments from the audience followed.

For more information on the goals and activities of the Biopolitics **International Organisation** and the **Hellenic Chapter of the Club of Rome**, please visit [www.biopolitics.gr](http://www.biopolitics.gr) and [www.clubofrome.gr](http://www.clubofrome.gr).