

Biopolitics International Organisation
and
The Hellenic Chapter of the Club of Rome



HELLENIC CHAPTER

Economic and Environmental Crises
An Opportunity to Build a Green Society

Tuesday, April 14th 2009

Office of the European Parliament in Greece

The **Biopolitics International Organisation** and the **Hellenic Chapter of the Club of Rome** organized a Symposium at the Office of the European Parliament in Greece on Tuesday, April 14th 2009, entitled “**Economic and Environmental Crises, An Opportunity to Build a Green Society**”. Ambassadors and distinguished personalities from the business and financial world composed the panel of speakers, while representatives **from 20 countries** were also present at the round table. Among the speakers, the following were present: the President and Founder of the Biopolitics International Organisation and the Hellenic Chapter of the Club of Rome, Prof. Agni Vlavianos Arvanitis co-chairing the symposium with Prof. Rusen Keles a B.I.O. Trustee and distinguished Professor from the University of Ankara; Giorgos Kasimatis, Director of the Office of the European Parliament in Greece; Ierotheos Papadopoulos, Director of the Representation of the European Commission in Greece; Theodoros Skylakakis, General Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Konstantinos Bakouris, President of Transparency International Hellas; Hana Mottlova, Ambassador of the Czech Republic; Katerina Papakosta-Sidiropoulou, Member of the Hellenic Parliament; Ioannis Bourloyannis-Tsangarides, Ambassador and Member of the Hellenic Chapter of the Club of Rome; Blagoj Handziski, Ambassador of FYROM; Ali Yahya, Ambassador of Israel; Antonis Gortzis, President of the European Business Ethics; Sverre Stub, Ambassador of Norway; Kees van Rij, Ambassador of the Netherlands and Deborah A. McCarthy, Deputy Chief Mission from the Embassy of the United States.

The following Diplomatic Corps were also present at the Symposium: Hermes Herrera Hernandez, Ambassador of Cuba; Ahmad Rusdi, Designate Ambassador of Indonesia; Luis Felipe Galvez, Ambassador of Peru; Oguz Celikkol, Ambassador of Turkey; Ito Makoto, Chargé d’ Affaires from the Embassy of Japan; Saad Al-Asousi, Chargé d’ Affaires from the Embassy of Kuwait and Dragan Petrovic, Chargé d’ Affaires from the Embassy of Serbia. Giuseppe Giacalone, the Head of Economic and Commercial Section from the Embassy of Italy, Mykola Taranenko, the Head of Trade and Economic Mission from the Embassy of Ukraine and Miriam Awad, the Economic Officer from the Embassy of the United States were also present. Also, Awais Manzur Sumra, the Commercial Counsellor from the Embassy of Pakistan; Vladimir Zatsepin, a Counsellor from the Embassy of the Russian Federation, Fahad Al-Mansouri, a Counsellor from the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia and Yavuz Kül, the First Secretary from the Embassy of Turkey.

The Symposium was followed with great interest by a distinguished public, while journalists from various papers and TV channels were also present to cover the event.

Professor **Agni Vlavianos Arvanitis** opened the speech by welcoming the distinguished speakers, the diplomatic corps and the public, on the occasion of Professor Keles' visit to Athens, a visit which set the foundation for a close cooperation between Turkey and Greece and led to the consolidation of the current Hellenic Aid programme that is being sponsored by the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Following this, Professor Vlavianos Arvanitis spoke about the current economic and environmental crises: "The world has been struck by a tsunami of epic proportions; we are witnessing simultaneous crises affecting both the global economy and the global environment. The financial crisis is characterised by the loss of jobs and income, unavailability of credit, and economic stagnation. On the environmental front, key issues include climate change, a declining resource base and pollution of the air, water and soil. Numerous species of plants and animals are becoming extinct, and fish are disappearing from our oceans. These problems are all inter-related and resolving them will require an unprecedented level of international cooperation. The dual crises are also an unprecedented opportunity to rethink our values, adopt new ethics and build a new Green society, a society of hope, harmony and the preservation of life."

A greeting by Mr. **George Kasimatis, the Director of the European Parliament Office in Greece** followed, which focused on the upcoming European elections in June: "It is important to discuss now the matters that have an impact on a national and international level. We still haven't seen these two dimensions on TV. It is important that citizens know why they vote for the upcoming elections. I hope the presence of journalists will help communicate the message today."

Mr. **Ierotheos Papadopoulos, the Director of the Representation of the European Commission in Greece**, made a valuable point: "Climate change is a reality. We need to see the present financial and environmental crises as an opportunity to switch to a more sustainable model because the current model is not. Lord Stern said that whatever we do, it will have a cost, so it is better to act now than later. We must act all together to avoid irreversible situations. Every year, 1% of our planet's biodiversity is lost. The model of the western countries is not sustainable and if every country consumed like the US, we would need 2 or even 3 planets. We need to proceed with our targets for 2020 together. On an individual level we can do even more. We speak a lot about the economic crisis these days, which make lots of people think that it is a luxury to speak about the environment but we should see this as an opportunity to switch to a more sustainable model, to a low-carbon economy. This is what we are trying to do on an EU level. Some countries have already set their goals for this."

Mr. **Theodoros Skylakakis, the General Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, spoke about the pressing matters of the economic and environmental crises: "We have been pumping billions of CO₂ and other gases in the atmosphere, in the last century or so, in what seems to be the biggest and most complex global experiment that humanity has even seen. We did not plan it to happen but it did and the species that will be affected most will be the people. For the next 30 years, we are locked in for a significant amount of climate change, because the phenomenon is cumulative. The world economies take time to implement policies, so we have to move fast. These two crises interact with each other because the economic crisis will leave us with fewer resources to deal with the phenomenon. This will lead to a dirtier economy. However, we can be certain that by investing in new technologies that fight climate change, we may have the possibility to enjoy a better future. It is an unfortunate event

that we have to deal with both crises at the same time. This year is crucial as the economic crisis will reach its peak in December, while at the same time, we will need to take crucial decisions in December in Copenhagen. If human vision is linked together with human creativity, we can have actual economic benefits and deal with the environmental crisis as well. We must not forget that the environmental crisis is a lot more serious than the financial crisis we are currently facing.”

Mrs. **Katerina Papakosta-Sidiropoulou** offered her opinion as a **Member of the Hellenic Parliament**: “We consider the environment a matter of global interest and together with the economy, it constitutes a matter of priority for the international global agenda. Although these two dimensions seem to be independent, they are closely related with each other. E.U priorities focus on changing the European development model and shifting it into a greener model for a Green Society. Some of these priorities are the renewable energy sources, green architecture, green transport and energy efficient buildings. Investing on the environment and on new technologies will increase profits and jobs in the long run and this is something that will benefit all industries. However, policies cannot be implemented without the participation of everyone and without creating a wider culture of global citizenship.”

Professor **Rusen Keles**, a **Professor from Ankara University, a B.I.O. Trustee** for many years and co-chair of this Symposium said: “The title of our meeting today presumes that humankind has an opportunity to build a green society which is really needed. We live in an era of almost endless crises. It seems that the concept of sustainable development itself has been largely replaced, at the beginning of the 21st Century, by sustained crises in all senses. Yet a revival of and respect for the principle of sustainable development may not only alleviate the adverse consequences of the economic and environmental crises facing the world today, but at the same time, it has a chance to change the color of the Earth from grey or white to green. Athens has been a source of inspiration for several environmental issues. The E.U. has instituted a set of policies to face those issues. Now, we just need to see how we can realize them. A law has been voted, recently, in Turkey in support of the Kyoto protocol. Environmental values are global and everybody’s responsibility. Biopolitics International Organization believes that in the last analysis, the public at large is the ultimate custodian of the Planet Earth. And solving environmental problems involves an absolute commitment of the NGOs working closer to the people, and developing a biocentric approach to public education.”

Mr. **Konstantinos Bakouris**, the **President of Transparency International Hellas** put an emphasis on the need for greater transparency in our society: “The world is facing a financial and economic crisis unprecedented in recent history. Transparency International has recognised the central role of transparency in mitigating the crisis and preventing future failures. Both the environmental and financial crises, with an emphasis on climate change, have the same roots: humanity’s unsustainable practices. Climate change is possibly the greatest government challenge the world has ever faced. Climate change is more than an environmental issue and it has the potential to undermine, or reverse, recent gains made in global poverty reduction. Even the Kyoto Protocol can be placed in danger. The poor countries always bear the greatest burden. Their sustainable livelihoods should be our first priority.”

H.E. **Kees van Rij**, the **Ambassador of the Netherlands**, spoke about the upcoming Copenhagen meeting later this year: “This is a year of elections in Europe- the European Parliament elections- and it is essential to continue to underline the urgency of countering climate change, as well as prepare for the Copenhagen summit later this year. Economic and environmental policies used to oppose each other but that is no longer the case. The 20-20-20 and the Copenhagen objectives have helped

tremendously towards the integration of the two. Politicians have to explain this to the people. There is a certain temptation to put the environment lower on the political agenda in this period of economic and financial crisis. But that would be the wrong approach. It is important to stress that no choice should be made between economic and environmental priorities. We should integrate them both into a Green European recovery plan by speeding up the transition to a carbon-poor society. The present economic crisis offers an opportunity to introduce new technologies and to invest in new industries. It is important to understand that countries can benefit from this. Having clear air is as important as having a job.”

H.E. Hana Mottlova, the Ambassador of the Czech Republic, delivered her speech, as a national of a member-country that currently has the EU Presidency: “The economic and environmental crises are global issues that require our undivided attention. We need to think and develop cooperation of a new kind by bringing together, states, NGOs, the private sector, stakeholders and other organisations to implement and engage them in environmental and economic policies. There should be urgency in our actions. Europe and USA should set the right example for the rest of the world. Moreover, there is the need to focus on education and support environmental democracy as well. Last but not least, it is worth mentioning that there have been some great achievements in the E.U, since January 2009, under the Czech Presidency, in the field of economy, finances and environmental protection.

H.E. Blagoj Handziski, the Ambassador of FYROM, thanked all those who participated and contributed new dimensions of peace and international cooperation with their speech.

H.E. Ali Yahya, the Ambassador of Israel, spoke about his country and how Israelis deal with the environmental crisis: “We live in a world that presents many challenges for our society. We have one environment and its challenges are common. They have no name tag. Pollution knows no race, no nationality and no religion. For years, Israel has been aware of the challenges created by the changes in the environment. Our governments, past and present, try to deal with this and introduce legislations to prevent future environmental impacts. Countries which invest on resources to protect the environment can share the hope of a better world. On one hand, we try to be creative by using our natural resources, like the sun, water, air and on the other, we try to reduce and prevent damages to the environment. At the end, Israel is happy to share its experience on environmental issues.”

H.E. Ioannis Bourloyannis- Tsangarides, Ambassador and Member of the Hellenic Chapter of the Club of Rome, believes there is still hope: “Climate change is a phenomenon which has the tendency to increase and deteriorate. Man has destroyed the Earth’s protective layers and in the last 20 years, we have been witnessing the outcome of this result. Environmental issues are important all over the world but we still have the possibility to create a Green Economy which will protect the environment. There should be no dilemma in our case. What we hear today will contribute to the creation of a Green Society. This is still possible, provided that we realize that the Earth is our Home.”

H.E. Sverre Stub, the Ambassador of Norway, spoke about the latest green measures in the EU and Norway: “There have been various opportunities in the past, in the form of reports on sustainable development that previous leaders and governments did not follow up because they were not ready. Recently, green measures are seen as something that makes sense economically both in a short and long perspective. The global economic crisis is a good opportunity for greening the economy but real change will only come when the people are ready for it. Public

awareness is very important. National accounting systems should change by taking environmental costs into account. Norway, although not a member of the EU, has set aside a few billion euros for international environmental investment projects and is also paying through direct financial contributions for projects in many member states, including Greece. Environmental projects are no.1 priority in this financial mechanism.”

Mr. Antonis Gortzis, the President of the European Business Ethics, spoke about business ethics and in a world of environmental and financial crises: “We have reasons to believe that 2009 and 2010 will be landmark years. The economic and environmental crises are top priorities in the political agenda. Poverty and climate change are interrelated and business ethics must play an important role in society. The current financial crisis needs new models of development and structural changes in the world economy to reduce unemployment. Economic development, true democracy, clean energy consumption and environmental impacts should be priority matters for Greece. As it is known, economic development depends on the environment and its available resources which in turn can be translated into consumption goods and quality of life. True Democracy is necessary for something like this to happen. Green development is the answer.”

Mrs. Deborah McCarthy, the Deputy chief of Mission from the Embassy of the United States spoke about President Obama’s Green Economy policies: “President Obama has already announced new policies to lower greenhouse gas emissions, signalling our commitment to lead global efforts to confront climate change. Internationally, the US is working with all major economies to stimulate real dramatic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. As Stern underscored: “We have been doing a lot of listening; a lot of sharing of ideas with many counterparts.” The Obama Administration reinforces its promise to combine science and pragmatism, discuss clean energy partnerships and work towards facilitating agreement in Copenhagen on mitigation and financing, technology, and adaptation. In order to achieve all that, we are linking with the private sector to identify opportunities to share new technologies and services in areas such as solar power, fuel cells, energy efficiency, and green buildings. The US and EU have teamed up together to bring alternative energy and energy conservation companies to the trade-show “Bright Green” at the Copenhagen Conference. There is also going to be considerable expansion on research and development in science and technology. President Obama has dedicated \$80 billion from our domestic stimulus package towards developing a “green economy” in the US, in an effort to increase green jobs and reduce emissions and the country’s dependence on imported oil. Finally, USAID already has an agreement with Hellenic Aid to install energy-efficiency and sustainable development projects in the Balkans.”