

BIOPOLITICS INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION

HELLENIC CHAPTER OF THE CLUB OF ROME



Biopolicy – Perspectives of Hope

Athens Money Show

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PRESS RELEASE

The escalating global financial crisis should not be used as an excuse to halt climate change efforts. The root of both problems is a crisis in values, in which short-term benefits are placed before the long-term survival of life on our planet. To raise awareness of the urgent need to balance development goals and the increasing necessity to mitigate climate change, the **Biopolitics International Organisation (B.I.O.)** and the **Hellenic Chapter of the Club of Rome** held a joint event on the occasion of the Athens Money Show, at Hilton Athens, on Saturday, **December 17, 2011**. The event convened a panel of distinguished speakers in an effort to promote an exchange of views for a brighter and more hopeful future.

Discussions were chaired by **Prof. Agni Vlavianos Arvanitis**, President and Founder of the Biopolitics International Organisation and the Hellenic Chapter of the Club of Rome, who stressed the need for an international strategy with a vision as an urgent priority in overcoming the current multiple crises:

“To overcome today’s multiple crises, it is essential to deliver a breakthrough on the international community’s response to climate change and to rethink the entire structure of our society by placing the environment at the core of every endeavor. Efforts to protect the environment cannot be fruitful in isolation. Alternative policies must be pursued as part of a concerted worldwide effort. We are not only suffering from an environmental and economic crisis. A crisis in values, a crisis in ethics and, above all, a crisis in leadership are threatening the survival of life on our planet. International leaders are attempting to face the enormous problems of our times by implementing inadequate solutions of the past. What we desperately need is to set the right priorities on the global leadership scene. We still view diversity as a threat. But we must realize that diversity in culture and nature is the wealth of our world, and the very element we must protect for the future. There is also a dire need for positive models that can serve as beacons of values to help achieve a society of hope. We need time-spanning ideals that can inspire leadership, hope and a new vision. New directions for professionals, volunteerism, the participation of youth, international education and global action. As proposed by B.I.O. since 1985, the bio-assessment of technology, with the environment as a common point of reference, can provide a synthesis of new values for the future. The Olympic Games can also play a major role in this effort. Today, the Olympic Games are a reflection of the current crisis. The possibilities of the human body are finite. We need to draw inspiration from time-

spanning ideals and focus the world's positively focused attention at the time of the Olympics on a vision that can have a real impact on society. For the past twenty years, B.I.O. imparts the message that the Olympics should involve the participation of every individual and every profession in the race to save the environment. There is not a moment to waste. Our true profit is a clean environment, better health, culture, education, international cooperation. This is the goal and vision for a brighter and hopeful future."

Tarcisio Navarrete – Montes de Oca, Ambassador of Mexico to Greece, presented his country's national priorities and strategies for climate change mitigation:

"Climate change and sustainable development are among the current priorities of Mexico. Although Mexico is not constrained by any international agreement to satisfy greenhouse gas emission reduction goals, the Federal Government has worked on the definition of goals of its own that show the disposition of our country to take action against climate change. Mexico is also the only developing country that has presented four national communications which report emissions inventories and action plans against climate change. In order to combat medium- and long-term climate change effects, Mexico promotes the use renewable energy, implements actions to improve air quality and waste management practices, and promotes a sustainable rural cities program and a clean transportation program. Also, Mexico's strategy includes clear adaptation objectives for the preservation of the country's ecosystems and endangered species through the creation of protected natural reserves, which, today, cover more than 25.75 million hectares. The forest resources of Mexico constitute a great opportunity to mitigate climate change. The main program which supports the forest sector generates development and improves the standard of living of forest dwellers through adequate management and use of natural resources. It also promotes the participation of land owners, especially in areas of indigenous populations, in order to enhance the development of productive forest preservation activities. In the light of climate change impacts that affect economic activities, Mexico proposed a "Green Fund" as a model for financing climate change actions in developing countries at the Climate Change Conference held this year in Durban. The project aims to help developing countries to adapt to a changing climate by combining proposals that can give increased predictable funding for climate actions in developing countries. To achieve this ambitious outcome, it is crucial that developing countries reach an agreement on financing climate actions. This proposal's goal is to help develop a funding model everyone can endorse. Unfortunately, the economic crisis is creating an unfavorable context, but Mexico insists in the struggle against climate change. All countries must and can contribute, depending on their possibilities to confront the problems derived from global climate change. Undertaking actions to generate growth linked to combating global warming is a pragmatic position that does not only concern environmental issues, but also relates to the viability of the global economy."

Ioannis Tzen, f. President and CEO of the Hellenic Exports Organisation and General Secretary of the Hellenic-Russian Chamber of Commerce, spoke about the Greek financial crisis and its direct connection to the global environmental crisis:

"The global financial crisis is directly related to the environment, because environmental protection is impossible without economic development. The current economic and environmental crisis, on both the national and international level, is an unquestionable fact. Greece is suffering financially and socially as a result of this crisis. We urgently need a developmental strategy, which will not only help to reduce the budget deficit but will also create infrastructure for the benefit of future generations. Investments are lagging behind

because of a serious lack in investment legislation. By encouraging investments, we can also curb unemployment. The younger generation has the courage to fight for the needed conditions to help Greece climb out of the recession and become an equal partner on the world scene. Greece joins South Africa as the country with the most days of sunshine, but depends on the import of energy because exploitation of renewable energy is non-existent. The country's mineral resources are also a hidden wealth. Additionally, there are many opportunities in farming and livestock rearing. Greece cannot be competitive in mass production, but Greek products could become branded to denote their superior quality. New strategies are also required in agro-tourism, sports tourism, and religious tourism, which can help to boost the economy and provide incentives for international investors. Biopolitics is an instrument of progress that can help to save our planet. If world leaders had assumed direct responsibility, then maybe a lot of damage would have been avoided. We do not have the luxury to wait. Everyone must become involved. A quote attributed to Abraham Lincoln says that the best way to predict the future is to create it. Greece has reached the point of creating its own future."

The final speaker, **Constantine Bakouris**, Chairman of Transparency International Greece, focused on the ethical dimensions that define the current crisis and shape our options for progress and development:

"I do not believe there is a single citizen in the developed world today that is not fully aware of the fact that our planet is experiencing a multidimensional crisis. We are all also fully aware of the problem of corruption and of its corroding effects on the public and private sector, on politics and society, which is quickly becoming a global pandemic. Climate change is one of the most important and urgent development challenges of our times, and along with the debt and credibility crises, reflects the catastrophic behavior of the human species. Corruption aggravates the effects of these crises by increasing costs and obstructing mitigation efforts. But climate change is also an issue of social justice. Mitigation measures are destined to fail if governments, businesses, markets and civil society lose trust in their effectiveness. Serious allegations already exist that the whole system has fallen victim to political negotiation which impedes reaching the targets set. The current state of the world economy also renders financing and management more problematic, because governments and international organizations focus their attention more on short-term issues, leaving climate change mitigation for later. However, the longer we delay in making binding decisions and taking drastic measures, in combating corruption which is partly responsible for the problem, and in reducing greenhouse gas emissions from various polluting activities, the higher the final bill we will be called upon to pay. In this respect, the multidimensional crisis plaguing society today is – and this has been repeatedly stressed – a crisis in values, and therefore constitutes, primarily, a political crisis. Those who work to reduce the effects of climate change and those who work to promote international transparency share the common goal of a sustainable future. Our world is still beautiful and we can make it even more beautiful if we work collectively and with a vision, a solution which will allow the emergence of hopeful perspectives."

The event concluded with an open discussion and comments from the audience. Participants included, among others: **Andreas Zaimis**, Lawyer and f. Cabinet Member; **Ioannis Maronits**, Vice President of the World Federation of UNESCO Clubs, Centers and Associations; **Volodymyr Shkurov**, Ambassador of Ukraine to Greece; Ambassador **Ioannis Bourlogiannis Tsangaridis**, and **George Kazantzopoulos**, Member of the Environmental Committee of the Greek Olympic Committee and Athens 2004 Environmental Manager.