



**Written address of the**

**Greek Foreign Minister  
Mr. Giorgos A. Papandreou**

**to the conference:**

**“Applying EU Environmental Legislation in the  
Field of Marine and Coastal Protection”**

**19-21 May 2003**

***Written address of Greek Foreign Minister, Mr. Giorgos A. Papandreou to the conference: “Applying EU Environmental Legislation in the Field of Marine and Coastal Protection”<sup>1</sup>***

Dear Friends,

I would like to cordially address the initiative of the National Marine Park to organise today’s conference as well as to express my satisfaction that the Greek society, through several meetings and institutions (NGOs, universities, ministries, chambers), is increasingly discussing the issue of the environment on a local, regional and global level.

The Greek Presidency, through the initiatives it has undertaken, has tried and has succeeded in including environmental concerns in the sector of external relations. I would like to briefly refer to these initiatives which we have already promoted to a first level.

First initiative: the European Union, responding to the Development Goals of the Millennium and to the results of the Johannesburg Summit on water resources, has inaugurated the initiative “Water for Life”. Greece leads the part of the initiative focussing on the Mediterranean including the Balkan countries. In this context, we can function effectively and in coordination with all institutions, our partners in the European Union as well as with all statutes and initiatives which exist in the Mediterranean and South-eastern Europe.

Second initiative: the Foreign Ministry and the World Bank have co-organised an international conference on “Sustainable development for lasting peace: shared water, shared future, shared knowledge”. The central theme of this conference was how the environment and common natural resources can support a low-key political approach of neighbouring countries (which have differences and possibly other priorities) upon which broader co-operations can be built gradually subsiding existing tensions.

Third initiative: taking action to promote European environmental diplomacy as a tool for increasing co-operation in environmental issues and as a means to subside crisis in the region. It is a challenge not to limit environmental diplomacy only to governmental circles and as a tool only in the hands of diplomats but to inspire and take citizens’ initiatives around the world into consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> The original Greek address of Foreign Minister Mr. Giorgos A. Papandreou was translated by Ecologic.

All above initiatives involve multilateral cooperation and action, multisectoral interventions as well as multisectoral participation; the beginning of their practical implementation is being made with water resources management.

Today, more than ever, we are witnessing an incremental increase of negotiations, international conventions and protocols. Many conventions concern also the marine environment. These conventions are under examination within the framework of developing and implementing a strategy of the European Union for the protection of the marine environment. We believe that the EU Water Framework Directive will play a synthetic and unifying role for the inclusion of actions foreseen in the regional marine conventions. The sea, especially in the Mediterranean region, is the most important element of all common global goods. Water in the Mediterranean determined and continues to determine the environment of the region, its economic development and its civilisation.

Finally, I would like to refer to the increasingly important role of the citizens in European and international meetings. The citizens discuss, exercise critique and make their own proposals. Sustainable development has at its focus mankind and the choices which have to be made and formed by the citizen himself, an informed citizen with knowledge of developments and consequences of each political choice. The environment and its management is not a technical issue, which only requires academic treatment. It is a clearly political issue in its broader meaning which should be treated both with will on behalf of the politicians as well as with determination on behalf of the citizens in their everyday choices.

Thank you.

Giorgos A. Papandreou