STATEMENT IN THE PLENARY OF THE 16TH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Delivered on behalf of H.E. Ms.Tina Birbili, Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Change of the Hellenic Republic by Mr. Dimitri Lalas, Senior Advisor for Climate Change

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Gracias Señora Presidente,

Madame President, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

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My delegation would like to thank you Madame President and the people of Mexico for hosting this Conference.

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you today some thoughts about the need to enhance political support for stronger international action on Climate Change and to accelerate the movement toward a new model of low carbon green economy, a movement especially relevant at this critical point for the future of our planet.

Our modern way of life and its expansion through globalization have led to economic crises that brought on serious doubts about our global development model.

We have expanded production and consumption activities to the limits of the global ecosystem.

We have created an environmental "bubble", and we have spent and "borrowed" at the expense of future generations.

The present paradigm of the world economy, the "New Economy" as some have called it, has provided many benefits to some, but it has deteriorated social and economic conditions for many others. It has created new and often huge wealth inequalities. It has led to food shortages prompting high prices for foodstuffs. It has put pressure on energy supplies and maintained or even increased energy poverty for some. It has exacerbated the accompanying problems of climate change and water scarcity and it has triggered enormous transformations at corporate and government level.

As the next decade will certainly be difficult for everyone, it should also lead us to re-think our values and priorities and hopefully to develop a new sustainable course for our future.

Globalization cannot be reversed.

Instead, it is our conviction that it should be humanized; and the current crisis provides us with an opportunity to do just that.

A new, Greener approach is needed, based among others on maximizing the sustainable potential of our human and natural resources and on ensuring environmental protection while safeguarding social cohesion and justice.

The World's nations meet once again, this time here in Cancun, in order to shape the extension past 2012 of our global agreement on action to address Climate Change.

We all recognize that Climate Change is a serious global challenge with impacts that affect us all.

In case we wanted to forget after last year, the heat wave of this year with the fires in Russia and the Near East, and record temperatures in cities as far apart as New York and Nicosia, the floods in Pakistan and Colombia and even in our neighbor Albania, the exceptionally early and severe snow falls in northern Europe and the droughts elsewhere, have again reminded us this year that we are fooling with Mother Nature at our peril.

Although urgent cooperative action is required, there is uncertainty and skepticism, and a feeling that we are back-pedaling when it comes to dealing with it in a meaningful way.

Greece, in the midst of severe difficulties, is firmly committed to Green Growth and to addressing climate change locally and at international level.

In contributing its share toward the EU's unilateral commitment for a 20% reduction of emissions by 2020, it has recently enacted legislation to increase the use of renewables so as to cover 20% of its final energy consumption and 40% of its electricity needs by 2020. It has also passed legislation to improve its building stock so as to reduce energy consumption from conventional sources to less than 10% of current levels by 2019.

Last month, eighteen Mediterranean Countries including parties from many groups represented here in these negotiations gathered in Athens and launched the Mediterranean Climate Change Initiative with the objective to address the challenges that lie ahead in our region.

Understanding the added value of cooperation, these countries decided to seek and utilize additional avenues for common action against climate change in the Mediterranean, especially in view of the extraordinary increase in temperature and reduction in rainfall that all models predict there.

And on the eve of this Conference, in the scope of the Greek Chairmanship of the Black Sea Economic Organization, the Foreign Ministers of the 12 parties of the Organization agreed in Thessaloniki to contribute actively to the success of this Conference and to endorse a regionally owned vision of "greening" the Black Sea and mitigating climate change through the promotion of clean energy and sustainable development.

Yet no country or group of countries can effectively address today's environmental issues alone.

Nor is the world bipolar.

It is changing rapidly and this process should also reflect this change.

Failure to do so will cause us to work inefficiently and in ways that will often result in competing against each other.

In order to move forward, it is imperative that we re-double our efforts to coordinate our action, and at this international process, to conclude negotiations on a strengthened, fair, effective and binding global agreement for a climate change regime after 2012 to tackle the climate change threat.

Thank you Madame President.