

**EURO-MEDITERRANEAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON WATER  
Dead Sea, Jordan, 22 December 2008**

Speaking Notes for Mr. I. Sibetheros, Special Secretary, Head, Central Water Agency,  
Hellenic Ministry for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, Greece  
Head, Greek Delegation to Jordan

Your Excellencies,  
Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Greek Government, and in particular the Ministry for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, I would like to express our honour and happiness to participate at this very important Event.

This Ministerial Conference has been planned and discussed amongst us for over 2 years particularly during the meetings of the Water Directors of the Euro-Mediterranean and Southeastern European Countries, twice in Athens, Greece and Bled, Slovenia. I have closely followed the steps towards the Conference and I therefore feel very pleased to attend this Conference as the culmination of our joint efforts.

This Ministerial, which comes almost 10 years after the last Ministerial on Water of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, constitutes a crucial milestone to our strain of efforts to address water challenges in the Mediterranean in an integrated approach, as a critical horizontal and cross-sectoral policy issue that should penetrate all other sectoral policies, themes and strategies, at both regional and national levels.

The countries gathered here today have different and various national particularities and circumstances. However we all share the same overarching challenges and objectives, living in a water scarce region and an ecosystem under stress.

Water demand management in the Mediterranean, constitutes an even more critical issue considering the constant intensification of climate change that gives rise to an increase in the severity and frequency of droughts. I will not get into more details as the issues are relatively known to us all and since the Theme Paper on Water and Climate Change has been distributed with the Conference material. Greece has worked together with Morocco and Spain, for the preparation of this document which gives an adequate in-depth analysis of the interlinkages between water scarcity and climate change. The need for better and more effective water governance schemes at all levels that would empower the civil society and would help central authorities to perform more efficiently, is another very important element that has also been well analysed in the related Theme Paper distributed. This document was prepared by Greece, Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority. These three elements I already mentioned coupled with a fourth element related to the need for viable financing mechanisms that would enable us to implement our policies, form the complex outline of the challenges we urgently need to address. Last but not least, there is need to tackle water issues in an integrated manner, addressing effectively all its

related aspects. Particularly for water supply, sanitation and health issues, the regional assessment elaborated by WHO as a contribution to MED EUWI provides a clear view of the current status and the trends in meeting the related Millennium Development Goals in the countries of the region.

The elaboration and implementation of a new Strategy on Water in the Mediterranean is definitely going to monopolize our discussions. We believe that to draft such a Strategy in an integrated manner and then to implement it, is a bold decision and clearly a necessary one. However, we should not feel that with this decision alone we have found the magic solution to our problems.

We should take the opportunity given to us by this Ministerial, this wide gathering of governments but also key regional stakeholders on water in the Mediterranean around the same table, and take a critical look at our past and current policies and their implementation so far. I believe that we have an abundance of policies, strategies, initiatives and networks on water. What is lacking is a better and more effective coordination of all existing mechanisms. We therefore hope that this Conference will be a mile stone for launching a better integration scheme of what we are already doing in order to make it result in substantial outcomes, while at the same time seeking comparability and consistency in our actions and avoiding duplication of work. This is what will be the key to a successful elaboration and implementation of the new Mediterranean Strategy on Water.

Greece, being the lead country of the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative since its beginning in 2003, has already acquired an important and transferable experience on the need for better coordination.

Building on this, we have submitted a project proposal in the context of the "Union for the Mediterranean" but also in the context of this Ministerial's Declaration Annex, that aims to support a "Multistakeholder Cooperation for the promotion of Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean with emphasis on water" for the creation of a 'new generation' 'Mediterranean Water Initiative'. We are positive and confident that this new coordination platform we are proposing will effectively support the elaboration of the new Mediterranean Water Strategy and we invite all of you to contribute to the practical implementation of this endeavour. We will also pursue possible synergies with other proposals such as the Dutch proposal.

At this stage, allow me to mention that the collaboration of Greece with the French Presidency of the EU and the European Commission has been fruitful and effective view of this Conference. The Declaration we are about to adopt is well balanced and adequately political.

Before closing, I would like to take the opportunity to thank once more the organizers of this Conference and in particular the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for its hosting, the European Commission for its strong steering and of course, the Governments of France and Egypt for their vision and tireless efforts in envisaging and setting up this Event.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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Your Excellencies,  
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Following up on my morning intervention, I would like to take the opportunity to stress once more that for us, the key to a successful elaboration and implementation of a new Mediterranean Water Strategy is the effective coordination between the abundance of policies, initiatives and networks on water we have in the region, their increased synergies and the avoidance of overlaps.

Greece, being the lead country of the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Inattentive since its beginning in 2003, has already acquired an important and transferable experience on this need for better coordination.

Building on this, we have submitted, as you know already, a project proposal in the context of the "Union for the Mediterranean" but also in the context of this Ministerial's Declaration Annex, that aims to support a "Multistakeholder Cooperation for the promotion of Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean with emphasis on water" for the creation with a 'new generation' 'Mediterranean Water Initiative'. We are positive and confident that this new coordination platform we are proposing will effectively support the elaboration of the new Mediterranean Water Strategy and we invite you all to contribute to the practical implementation of this project endeavour.

In closing, I would like to take the opportunity to thank once more the organizers of this Conference and in particular the Government of the Kingdom of Jordan for its hosting, the European Commission for its strong steering and of course, and most importantly, the Governments of France and Egypt for their vision and tireless efforts in envisaging and setting up this Event.

Thank you very much for your attention.