



**Permanent Mission of Greece
to the United Nations**

**High Level Political Forum 2020
Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece,
H.E. Mr. Nikos Dendias**

Greece reaffirms its strong commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as an ambitious and universal framework for a sustainable development trajectory, which balances and highlights economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainability.

In the context of this year's HLPF focusing on "*Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development*" we believe that in order to pursue the SDGs as a set of transformative goals, we need collective, coordinated and complementary action from all sectors of society. The success of the 2030 Agenda depends on partnerships with all actors concerned: governments, institutions, agencies, the private sector and civil society. Global issues such as climate change, ocean governance and migration governance require global or collective action, always bearing in mind the need for a rules-based global order and in line with international law.

Although some progress is being made and some favorable trends on SDG implementation are evident, illustrating the hard work that many governments and their partners have been undertaking since 2015, Greece is deeply concerned with the large-scale death toll and human suffering that have been caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. International and multilateral cooperation is more important now than ever, considering that COVID-19 is a global crisis that does not respect national boundaries. We therefore stress the need for a timely and effective response of the international development community.

The national and international response to COVID-19 often involved the introduction of digital solutions for e-government and other transactions. In order to leave no one behind, we should strive to address the disparities in the access to new technologies between the wealthiest and the poorest, women and men. Alongside numerous challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic offers an opportunity to promote digitalisation and bridge the digital gaps around the world. Greece is a proponent of strengthening youth entrepreneurship and employability prospects,

particularly in Africa, also through the promotion of development actions designed to strengthen digital literacy and skills. We should reach out to the most vulnerable, be they people with disabilities, women and girls, long-term unemployed, LGBTI etc..

Ensuring that “no one is left behind”, including with regard to promoting everyone’s access to healthcare services in line with the SDG 3, remains essential. Closely linked to tackling poverty and social exclusion, is people’s access to quality health services. Health can be regarded as both a social good and right. Investing in health is a basic requirement for safeguarding human dignity, combating poverty and inequalities, ensuring social cohesion and advancing economic development. In addition, improving the population’s health leads to increased productivity and reduced healthcare and rehabilitation costs.

Ensuring the planet’s wellbeing is equally important as is economic growth and social prosperity and cohesion. Sometimes the environmental dimension of the SDGs is even more critical, as it can provide a catalyst and an accelerator for the achievement of all other non environmental SDGs. The future of life on our planet is in jeopardy, as climate change is having increasingly severe impacts and biodiversity is fast declining. The COVID-19 crisis itself is closely linked to human pressure on ecosystems, loss of biodiversity and climate change.

It is therefore more urgent than ever to maintain our high level of ambition to protect our environment and fight against climate change, to boost our economies’ and societies’ resilience, and to “build back, better and greener” in our recovery efforts.

After a prolonged economic crisis, Greece aspires to become a paradigm for how a socially just transition to a circular, low-emission economy can create green jobs and economic growth. The Greek Government has adopted and is meticulously implementing an ambitious green agenda, which approaches environmental sustainability not as an isolated issue, but as the thread that connects every aspect of our policies:

At the heart of this agenda is the battle against climate change. Greece has embraced the EU’s strategic long-term vision to become the world’s first climate-neutral economy by 2050. As part of our renewed National Energy and Climate Plan, we have committed to shut down all lignite-powered plants by 2028. This commitment is combined with an extended investment plan to guarantee a social and economic Just Transition for the affected regions. We also aim to increase the share of renewable energy (RES) in gross final energy consumption to 35% until 2030. We are promoting smart and e-mobility and, as an island country, we are giving particular emphasis to the electrical interconnection of all islands by 2030, to ensure energy security, efficiency and emissions’ reduction. These interventions target several SDGs including 7, 9, 10 and 13. In the same time, we take concrete international initiatives on the

field of protection of cultural heritage from the consequences of climate change.

Greece has an exceptionally rich species' and ecosystems' diversity, is a hot-spot for endemism and hosts 30% of Europe's biodiversity (SDG 15 as well as SDGs 2 and 11), while already achieving SDG 14.5. Thus, our green growth efforts go hand-in-hand with the protection of biodiversity. We are taking important and bold steps for increasing the effectiveness of the governance system of our numerous protected areas. By 2021 we will complete the mapping and assessment of our ecosystems and their services (natural capital accounting), while we are filling in the knowledge gaps for species and habitats and further integrating biodiversity considerations in all sectoral policies.

The shift to a circular economy (SDG 12 as well as SDGs 6, 8, 9, 16 and 17) is another major priority for Greece. This is why we have created an Inter-ministerial Committee, coordinated by the Ministry of Environment and Energy, as well as a National Circular Economy Council comprising of all key stakeholders. We are focusing on controlling plastic litter from our land and seas, and from June 2021 many single use plastics will be banned and others will be significantly limited. We are drafting a new national action plan for Green Public Procurement, while a strategy for the reduction of food waste is underway. The shift to circular economy patterns for us is much more than innovation in waste management and resource efficiency: it can help create new jobs, promote entrepreneurship as well as awareness among the society at large on sustainable development and strengthening of social ties between groups and citizens.

We also believe that sustainable development is impossible without peace. Inclusive institutions, justice and peace are at the core of stable societies. We simply cannot underestimate the value of sustainable peace, built through partnerships, dialogue, mutual respect and understanding. Greece lies in the eastern Mediterranean, a region with significant geostrategic and geo-economic challenges and opportunities. We have adopted policies that prioritize cooperation between countries, peace and the enhancement of the role of Greece as an actor favouring stability in its wider region. We are committed to finding peaceful and just solutions to disputes and conflicts and safeguard and promote the respect for international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Estimates of the magnitude of resources needed for the achievement of the SDGs are of the order of trillions of dollars annually. It is therefore imperative to mobilize business by helping them understand SDG-related risks and opportunities. Building on a good understanding of the SDGs, the next step is for companies to develop capacity at all levels to create strategies and actions that help maximize the company's positive impact on society, while also generating business value.

We recognize that the integrated nature of the SDGs requires a global response. We therefore renew our commitment to multilateralism and to joint efforts with key development actors in order to keep pace with the rapid changes taking place.

It is our firm belief that under a spirit of shared responsibility and with coordinated, collaborative, focused and results-oriented action we can fulfill together the promise of a more prosperous and peaceful world.