

BIOPOLITICS INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION

HELLENIC CHAPTER OF THE CLUB OF ROME



“Inspiring Climate Change Mitigation Policy – Leadership with a Vision”

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European Parliament Office in Athens

PRESS RELEASE

Is there a crisis in leadership? Are international organizations lacking in vision and turning into bureaucratic instruments instead? Is the world eager to participate in a society of vision and hope? Could education serve as a tool for reversing unemployment and providing the needed guidelines and vectors of light that could save *bios* – life – on our planet? Can “bio-diplomacy” reduce arrogance and hatred? Is climate change the common threat that can unite us all in taking action?

These are some of the questions raised by Prof. **Agni Vlavianos Arvanitis**, President and Founder of the **Biopolitics International Organisation (B.I.O.)** and the **Hellenic Chapter of the Club of Rome**, who organized and chaired an inspiring conference at the European Parliament Office in Athens, on November 11, 2014. The event featured Dr. **Dionysia-Theodora Avgerinopoulou**, Member of the Hellenic Parliament, Chairperson of the Special Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Environmental Protection, and President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union’s Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs, as **keynote speaker**. Greetings were given by: **Leonidas Antonacopoulos**, Head of the European Parliament Office in Greece; **Ester Sándorfi**, Ambassador of Hungary; **Ivan Starčević**, Ambassador of Croatia; and, **Volodymyr Shkurov**, Ambassador of Ukraine.



Prof. **Agni Vlavianos Arvanitis** opened the event by stressing the urgent need for adopting an all-encompassing approach to climate policy development in order to inspire leadership with a vision and move society towards a future where bios thrives. “If we wish to build a better future we have to rely on young leaders who can inspire all of us to participate and contribute to the mitigation of climate change. For almost 30 years, B.I.O. has been infusing society with new values hoping to make a difference in the way we perceive the urgency of climate action. Research, education, and the participation of enlightened leaders, as well as of every concerned citizen, can mobilize our collective knowledge and action leading to tangible steps for climate change mitigation. However, the most essential part remains the parameter of time. If we do not hear the ticking clock,

then we are ethically responsible for the damages and the problems that we delegate to future generations. Leadership with a vision is crucial for bios on our planet to survive and prosper.”

Leonidas Antonacopoulos, Head of the European Parliament Office in Greece, thanked Prof. Vlavianos Arvanitis and congratulated her for her initiative and vision. He pointed out that it was a privilege for the European Parliament Office to host such a distinguished audience and emphasized the increased environmental awareness of EU citizens today. “A recent European census placed climate change among the most important challenges (second to poverty and water security) facing Europe’s citizenry (68% of respondents). The problems of climate change compromise quality of life in European countries and lead to major problems in the sectors of tourism and agriculture. Urgent international measures are needed to mitigate climate change and create low carbon societies. EU discussions completed just last week in Paris explored the issues, challenges, and solutions for securing a strong, international climate action agreement by 2015. Furthermore, European structural funds are increasingly being channeled for funding climate change mitigation and protection of natural resources. It is the goal to raise ten billion dollars by 2020 and all EU partners have been invited to contribute towards this end.”



Ester Sándorfi, Ambassador of Hungary, emphasized that the economic crisis often deters from other crucial issues influencing our daily lives and definitely our future. “Climate change is surely one of them. Time and time again we receive warning signs from nature that we need to act urgently. In Hungary and other countries, heavy rains and flooding took their toll in the recent past. Climate change is a cross cutting issue with vast political and sociological consequences and, as such, should be addressed at the highest possible political level. Three weeks ago, the Council of Europe agreed on the new 2030 Climate and Energy Policy Framework. Central European countries, Hungary included, were united in achieving maximum flexibility and financial assistance to modernize their energy

systems and meet future climate targets. We are particularly happy that the EU’s climate package took into consideration the different means of member states. This showed that joint will and solidarity can be stronger than individual ambition, and this is the great success of the European Union. But the EU itself is not sufficient to solve the problems of climate change. The combat against climate change can be successful only if there is a global effort to do so. Hungary has made a strong commitment to this end, and it is our intention to provide a good example in the implementation of these global targets.”

Ivan Starčević, Ambassador of Croatia, expressed his admiration for the work of the Biopolitics International Organisation, which extends beyond biology and comprises every human endeavor. “The work of Biopolitics has proven that we cannot sustain perpetual growth without concern for the planet. The EU has agreed on binding targets for climate change mitigation that the previous speakers, who are more versed in the topic than I am, have addressed in detail. In 1961, US President John Fitzgerald Kennedy addressed the UN General Assembly by proclaiming that every inhabitant of this planet must



contemplate the day when this planet may no longer be habitable. Many years later, we cannot underestimate the importance of the environment, and I would like to congratulate Prof. Agni Vlavianos Arvanitis and the Biopolitics International Organisation for raising global awareness of these crucial concerns.”



Volodymyr Shkurov, Ambassador of Ukraine, thanked Prof. Vlavianos Arvanitis for the invitation and emphasized that climate change is a global environmental problem, crucial for the future of humanity. “We are all here today to think and understand that humanity will not be able to stop climate change if we do not limit the use of fossil fuels which have resulted in the greenhouse effect. Extreme weather events across the planet have resulted in rising sea levels, water shortages and land degradation. Ukraine examines the questions of its participation in the UN framework convention on climate change and is preparing a national action plan to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Economic development programs in Ukraine include comprehensive energy conservation and climate change mitigation measures for the industrial sector. I would like to congratulate Prof. Vlavianos Arvanitis. It is symbolic that the Biopolitics International Organisation was founded in Greece, and inspires a responsible position for environmental protection across the globe.”

Keynote Speech

Following these introductory remarks, Dr. **Dionysia-Theodora Avgerinopoulou**, the event’s keynote speaker, proceeded to thank the organizers, the Hellenic Parliament, as well as her constituents for supporting her in her commitment to convey a message of sustainability for the millennium to international institutional agendas. She also stressed the historic role of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, of which she is the Standing Committee President on United Nations Affairs, in bringing together members of all political parties in the pursuit of common goals, in the name of democracy and global peace. She then addressed recent international developments concerning the adaptation of a legally binding instrument to combat climate change, to be discussed next week at the UN Headquarters in New York and in three weeks at the Climate Change Conference in Lima, Peru. “Recent developments concerning the adaptation and launch of a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs) give hope that the SDGs will be the overriding framework in all climate change negotiations. In this effort it is essential to ensure the full involvement of relevant stakeholders and expertise from civil society in order to provide a diversity of perspectives and experience. The seventeen SDGs in question concern the targets of: 1) ending poverty in all its forms everywhere; 2) ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture; 3) ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages; 4) ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all; 5) achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls; 6) ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all; 7) ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all; 8) promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; 9) building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and



sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation; 10) reducing inequality within and among countries; 11) making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; 12) ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns; 13) taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; 14) conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development; 15) protecting, restoring and promoting the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably managing forests, combating desertification, and halting and reversing land degradation and halting biodiversity loss; 16) Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; and, 17) strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development. We are all holding our breath to see whether it will be possible to arrive at a binding instrument for climate change mitigation. A seminal event took place at the recent summit meeting at the UN headquarters in New York, with millions attending. No leader was able to deny the necessity for a binding agreement, a legal document binding developed and developing countries alike. An all out effort to lower global temperatures by two degrees and set targets for a carbon-neutral economy. We all need to cluster together in order to succeed. People and leaders need to be supported in this effort.”

The meeting was attended by a distinguished audience, including delegates from the Embassies of **Egypt, Japan, Indonesia, and Albania**, Members of the **Hellenic Parliament**, diplomats, academics, journalists, and business leaders. The deliberations concluded with a lively discussion, which addressed some crucial problematics concerning the future of international climate policy and action.

Prof. **Nicolas Moussiopoulos**, Deputy Chairman of the Governing Board of the International Hellenic University, pointed out that the achievement of green inclusive growth often results in problems and inequalities. “We need skilled persons to advise on the increased urgency of actively engaging civil society in climate change mitigation. Events like these are crucial in raising the necessary awareness, and education is also essential. Therefore, the International Hellenic University, the first Greek state university to offer programs of study exclusively in the English language, features an extensive program on sustainable development.”

Costas Bakouris, Chairman of Transparency International Greece, raised the important issue of climate change and corruption. “Climate change is arguably the biggest challenge we have ever faced. Climate change has resulted from corruption, but also huge expense is needed to prevent and respond to it. This means tempting opportunities for corruption from uncoordinated channels and increased risk of exploitation by corrupt interests. These issues are crucial and need to be seriously addressed.”

Finally, **Alexandros Vrachnos**, f. Chairman of the Permanent Commission on Green Transport, stressed the need to support the development of green technology, which is crucial for climate change mitigation. “We should not be discouraged by the cost of new technologies. Fossil fuel technologies are being developed for the last 150 years so the cost is very low. New technologies are more expensive, but they have to be supported and accepted as the only viable solution. For example, Toyota is developing hydrogen vehicles that run on hydrogen fuel cells and have a range of 700km. They can be fuelled at hydrogen filling stations, they are very quiet, and the only emissions are water vapor.”

Dionysia-Theodora Avgerinopoulou holds a J.S.D. (Ph.D.) in International Environmental Law from Columbia University School of Law and an LL.M. in International Legal Studies from Georgetown Law Center, and is the Director of the European Institute of Law, Science and Technology. She is the Chairperson of the Special Permanent Committee on Environmental Protection of the Hellenic Parliament, and the Chairperson of the Subcommittee of the

Watercourses of the Special Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Environmental Protection. She was recently elected Chairperson of the Standing Committee on UN Affairs of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and a year ago the Chairperson of the Circle of the Mediterranean Parliamentarians on Sustainable Development (COMPSUD). In March 2011, she was elected Young Global Leader of the World Economic Forum for her leadership in environmental protection. She was also selected among the “40Under40” of the EU, as one of the most promising 40 leaders of the European Union under forty. She is the author of several articles on environmental and international issues and has presented her work at several international conferences. She has also received a number of distinctions and honors.

*The goal of the **Biopolitics International Organisation** (www.biopolitics.gr) and the **Hellenic Chapter of the Club of Rome** (www.clubofrome.gr) is to act as catalysts and infuse society with new values. The world has been struck by epic crises affecting both the global economy and the global environment. Solving the problem of climate change and engaging all societal stakeholders in a vision of hope requires an unprecedented level of international cooperation. Climate change mitigation is also an opportunity to rethink our values, adopt new ethics and build a future of hope. Through its extensive e-learning program (<http://elearning.biopolitics.gr/>) B.I.O., in cooperation with friends in 150 countries, provides a series of courses and educational material online making environmental education accessible free of charge to thousands of citizens across the globe.*

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