

ROUNDTABLE
DISCUSSION
HOSTED AT THE
BANK OF GREECE

'BIOPOLICY –
INSPIRING
INNOVATION IN
THE DIRECTION
OF CLIMATE
CHANGE
MITIGATION'



Professor Agni Viavianos Arvanitis, President and Founder of the Biopolitics International Organisation & the Hellenic Chapter of the Club of Rome



The Biopolitics International Organisation (BIO) and the Hellenic Chapter of the Club of Rome successfully concluded a conference on *Biopolicy – Inspiring innovation in the direction of climate change mitigation*. The event was held at the end of last month at the Bank of Greece and featured many distinguished speakers who clearly demonstrated the need for a major paradigm change for climate change mitigation, encompassing social, economic and political spheres.

The conference was chaired by Professor Agni Viavianos Arvanitis, President and Founder of the Biopolitics International Organisation and the Hellenic Chapter of the Club of Rome, who greeted all participants and presented the concept of biopolicy as a global paradigm for climate change mitigation. "What a joy to have all of you here today, to communicate from the heart, to give perspectives on new horizons, but to also address the state of the art in innovation for climate change mitigation. Time is of the essence, and there is not a moment to spare. People feel helpless and disappointed by their leaders. Arrogance and money are not the answer. Bios – life – the most precious possession on our planet, is the unique gift that we need to appreciate and maintain for the future. For the past 30 years, BIO has tried to infuse society with biocentric values. This was the goal of the International University for the Bio-Environment, launched in 1991, as well as of numerous other initiatives aiming at lifting the barriers among sectors and placing environmental appreciation at the heart of society. A society of enlightened leadership and not of fragmented decisions that lead nowhere. Through the bio-assessment of progress, *techné* and technology, with creativity and vision, can create the beautiful dynamics for the protection of biodiversity, given to us so generously. A Bank of Ideas for climate change mitigation can provide information and know-how quickly and efficiently to save time and resources. We need inspiration and a life-supporting vision to build a society of hope. We need to achieve mutual gain, not mutual suffering. Less than 1% of the world's population controls over 55% of the planet's wealth. It is time to mobilise society to invest in life-supporting strategies that will ensure the survival of our planet. The present symposium, held in such a historic and inspiring venue, can make a significant step forward in the search for answers. As we are faced with complex and ever-changing challenges, our distinguished speakers can vaccinate us with new thinking to bring about innovation and change."

Dr. George Tyrogiannis, Director of the 2nd Internal Medicine Department at the P. Falero Clinic of the Athens Medical Group expressed his appreciation and delight to see so many people with a genuine interest in the most valuable efforts of BIO. "Our planet is blessed with the unique gift of biodiversity – 8.7 million species, while there is strong evidence that 80% of all species on the planet are still undiscovered. We are blessed to live in a world which is blessed with life. The term biopolitics itself alludes to the sum total of all fields and issues related to life. Bios (*βίος*) is an interesting word in its own right and can be further analysed in two ways: our aspiration towards infinity ∞, towards our unlimited self, and the breath of life. Mother Earth acts like a womb that has provided the space and time for life to be born. We are currently failing to protect our planet and climate change represents one of the boundaries we have crossed in making our planet less hospitable. It is doubtful whether we, as humans, have a long future ahead of us if we fail to protect planet Earth. The options for creating a unified world are limitless;



we just need to act. The letter "β" in βίος also symbolises the lungs in our bodies, which deliver oxygen to all our cells. There are 37.2 trillion cells in the human body, all functioning in perfect harmony and collaboration. Let us draw inspiration from this harmony, as our ability to better the world can be infinitely expanded by preserving and enhancing life."

Professor Momir Djurovic, President of the Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts and f. Dean of the Electrical Engineering Faculty at the University of Montenegro was the event's keynote speaker. "The problems of the 21st Century cannot be addressed by any government or institution acting alone. As Mahatma Gandhi professed, *'the world has enough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed'*. World population growth, dwindling natural resources and species, fast rates of extinction and exploitation, habitat loss, degradation and pollution are leading to an enormous ecological footprint, 25% higher than the planet is able to sustain. Moreover, global threats such as poverty, rapidly expanding inequality between the rich and poor, global warming and rising CO₂ emissions despite repeated alarm calls, point to the urgency of deploying technology and knowledge to address these unsolved challenges. The framework to assess the global prospects for humanity relies on scientific and technological breakthroughs. Energy, sustainable development, population growth, water and food security, education, disease prevention, migration, can be brought into balance by enhancing decision-making. However, technology has uncertain results and we must be able to secure that growing energy demands are met safely and efficiently. The Earth's energy budget both as a consumer and emitter of energy must be balanced. A difference between a 2°C and a 4°C rise in global temperature can be catastrophic. Soon enough, the challenge might be survivability not just sustainability. The shortcomings in policy frameworks are obvious. The dilemma of increasing economic growth at the expense of the environment in a business-as-usual scenario is no longer

present. We need to look for new economic models and to change GDP on the basis of a dual strategy to solve the energy problem. We must massively reduce the absolute consumption of environmental resources, as extreme efficiency in the 21st Century may allow society to function with 20% of its current energy consumption levels. Constructing a coherent vision for a civil society needs to become a priority for those who lead the world."

Sotiris Mousouris, f. UN Assistant Secretary General, described how three days before, a high-level signing ceremony convened by the UN Secretary-General had taken place as a first step in implementing the Paris Agreement on climate change. "At the ceremony, the US Vice President declared that denying climate change is like denying gravity, while Leonardo DiCaprio gave an impassioned speech, calling for *'no more talk, no more excuses, no more 10-year studies'*. Human responsibility for climate change cannot be disputed. We can only be grateful to BIO who has made it their duty to talk about these challenges and has convened the present meeting. Greenhouse gas emissions are on the rise as they have increased more than 5% since 2010. The poor of our planet suffer the most from climate change as they are the most vulnerable. Climate change leads to conflict and waves of refugees and migrants, resulting in social unrest. Polar ice caps are receding at alarming rates. It is difficult for governments to enforce emissions cuts, but businesses have to realise that innovation in this direction can result in profit as climate change is taking centre stage in international policy. The UN meeting in Stockholm 44 years ago was just the beginning for the preservation and enhancement of the environment. Today, world leaders are announcing more and more initiatives and commitments as the world expects urgent and effective action to meet these great challenges of our times. But there is a host of actions for individual citizens as well. Civil society must be present at every level and meetings such as this are a step in the right direction. There is no excuse for inaction. No excuse if we do not want to say *'no exit'*."

H.E. Benny Bahanadewa, Ambassador of Indonesia shared some of Indonesia's experiences in the realm of global action for climate change mitigation. "It is a distinct privilege that leaders recently signed the Paris Agreement, a solid foundation in addressing climate change. Indonesia is a frontline state in the efforts to tackle the climate change and has been a passionate proponent of pro-environment policies at the domestic and global level. As the largest archipelago in the world, with the second largest biodiversity in the world, Indonesia is a passionate proponent of climate change policy development. Indonesia also participates in ASEAN which has been a major focus of the country's international relations. As an island nation, Indonesia is very vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including natural disasters, risk of flooding, sea level rise, food insecurity and increase in water borne and vector borne diseases. In 2009, Indonesia pledged to a voluntary target of a 26% reduction in GHG emissions below the business as usual level by 2020 and has since promulgated many relevant legal and policy instruments. In 2015, Indonesia made a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and took several steps in the direction of climate change mitigation and adaptation in areas such as the forestry sector, waste management and transportation and energy. The government also issued a National Action Plan on climate change adaptation with an integrated concept. Adopting appropriate legal instruments and government institutions is essential in building ecosystem and landscape resilience, as well as economic and social resilience."

Theodora Antonakaki, Climate Change Impact Study Committee Scientific Secretary for the Bank of Greece, mentioned that, in 2009, the Bank of Greece set up a Committee of Scientists in order to produce a study on the environmental, economic and social impacts of climate change in Greece, and, in particular, on the cost of climate change for the Greek economy. "In the current second phase of the

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The speeches were followed by a discussion and questions from the audience, which included Members of Parliament, business leaders, scientists, academics and other people of influence. The overwhelmingly positive response from all participants confirmed the need for a new vision to shape our world and worldviews in order to dynamically address the climate change challenge.