

## **Intervention by the President of the ESC of Greece**

RIO 2020, 15-6-2012

During this critical period for the global economy, the issue of sustainable development is of great importance. Everyone agrees that no time can be wasted and that the planning and implementation of a development model, which will respect the principles of sustainability and will give a development boost for the benefit of employment, is immediately required.

As far as my country is concerned, as you surely know, it is in a very critical situation, where deep recession does not help at all, far from it, in dealing with high public debt and public deficit. At the same time, the principles of environmental sustainability are threatened to decline. Greece without development is not able, in any case, to repay its debts and become financially and socially sustainable. The exit from the crisis can be based on fiscal discipline, only to the extent that the recession begins. Thus, at the point that the country is right now the only way out is **development targeting, specifying and using its comparative advantages and correcting the structural problems.**

Basic strategies in such a new development model should be, among others:

- the development of rural economy from primary production to standardization and industrial production,
- promoting the use of renewable energy sources,
- developing quality tourism that respects the principles of sustainable development and benefits from the particular characteristics of the Greek environment and climate.

**In the field of agriculture**, the aim should be to create a sustainable and competitive system of agriculture, which produces quality and safety food products, is able to respond to consumer demands, is environmentally friendly and retains the landscape, contributes to rural development, to the creation of new jobs, and also to the emergence of a wide range of activities in disadvantaged, mountainous and island rural areas.

In this particularly difficult context, top priority should be to benefit from the characteristics of the Greek land that contribute to the production of high quality agricultural products, products of designated origin and organic products.

In this context, activities with high added value should be emphasised, namely the standardization of agricultural products, the production and export of food of high quality and high nutritional value, cosmetics and herbal products from the rich Greek nature. All these are significant opportunities for growth, employment and stimulating of the extroversion of the Greek economy.

**In the field of renewable energy sources**, I want to stress that Greece has substantial potential which, if used, can lead to multiple environmental and economic benefits with a substantial reduction of energy dependency and environmental pollution and creation of new jobs. However, this use should be done in such a way that the country will benefit economically and environmentally, and not by fragmented measures, e.g. the HELIOS program which is included in the specific commitments undertaken by Greece. About this project, as it has been planned so far, the ESC of Greece has expressed serious concerns about both its viability and, much more, its contribution to the national economy.

In any case, the development of renewable energy sources requires an overall location planning, which will respect the principles of green development, will not create visual impact and will not alter the character of the Greek landscape, with adverse consequences in other sectors (e.g. tourism, farming, etc.).

**In the tourism sector**, it is now clear that the model of over-exploitation of tourism resources and the subsequent accumulation of negative spatial features and environmental consequences are resulting in reduced competitiveness of the tourism sector. Given that the model of tourism development does not take into account the spatial and environmental degradation that has time limits that are being approached, a modernization of the tourism development model in the sense of sustainability, with a shift in

quality tourism that highlights all the comparative advantages of Greece (water environment, islands, diverse landscape, monuments, traditional settlements) and the development of so-called alternative forms of tourism, is needed.

Synopsizing, I would say that the question that has to be answered is whether in conditions of economic crisis the alternative policies for “greening” economies could be effectively supported in terms of the considerable amounts of the investment needed.

For example, in many cases the cost of the transition seems to be considerably higher for alternative energy than for “traditional” sources.

However I consider that environmental sustainability should not be sacrificed in the name of economic crisis which are finally circular phenomena. That makes me think that the application and the respect of common rules is a necessity. The utility of Kyoto agreement is always actual but unfortunately some countries haven't introduced it in their national legal system.

Closing today's intervention, I would like to stress that restarting the economy can be achieved by boosting growth where key components will be the sustainability of development and environment, knowledge society, innovative entrepreneurship, extroversion, employment and social cohesion. All these elements will lead my country from the recession and austerity to the sustainable economic and social development.