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STATEMENT MADE BY THE GREEK MINISTER OF THE
ENVIRONMENT, PHYSICAL PLANNING AND PUBLIC WORKS

Ms. VASSO PAPANDREOU

AT THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
JOHANNESBOURG, 26 AUGUST-4 SEPTEMBER 2002

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Colleagues

Greece feels that the global community assembled here in Johannesburg has to reach a meaningful global deal, with time-bound targets, a comprehensive action plan and the appropriate means of implementation. We have to succeed as the peoples of this world are watching us closely with high expectations from this Summit.

It is true Mister Chairman that we have walked a long way since Rio. Still, progress towards the goals established at the Earth Summit, ten years ago, has been rather slow. We gathered here in Johannesburg to revitalize the "Rio Spirit" and accelerate the process towards sustainability, equity and the improvement of the quality of life, for all.

The 1992 Earth Summit had concluded that unsustainable developmental patterns cause serious environmental deterioration and impoverish vast areas of our planet. It is estimated that current levels of production and consumption are considerably higher than the Earth's capacity to replenish itself. We have also learnt since Rio that poverty and environmental degradation are closely linked in an "underdevelopment trap".

This vicious circle has to be broken. Wide disparities of wealth disrupt economic systems, deteriorate the natural resources, marginalize people and lead inevitably to conflicts and even terrorism. The globalization

process has therefore to be beneficial to all, making them capable to reap its potential benefits. An equitable access to resources is a necessary precondition for sustainability to become a reality. Striking a balance between the environmental, social and economic pillars of sustainable development should be the final outcome of this Summit.

We cannot accept that 2 billion people across the earth live in absolute poverty, Mister Chairman. Better living conditions, sufficient food, clean water, reliable and renewable energy sources have to be provided to all and quantifiable targets should be established. But at the same time the environment must be taken into account, as a degraded nature will hold poor societies in the hunger and disease grip.

Greece believes Mister Chairman that the Implementation Plan to be finalized here has to recognize the importance of strengthening the institutional framework for sustainable development at the international, national and local levels and of better reflecting the environmental and social dimensions. Greece as part of the European Union, the world's leading power in Official Development Assistance, is determined to play its part in assisting developing countries to integrate their economic, social and environmental policies in the most effective way. But this will not be sufficient. ODA should be coupled with a relief in the debt burdens and by a better access to markets for the developing world. On the other hand we expect developing countries to show progress in matters of human rights and democracy.

We must agree Mister Chairman, that a decoupling of economic development from acute pressures on the environment and the natural

resources should be a central target established here in Johannesburg. We should also commit ourselves that we will implement the rich legacy of Rio and the provisions of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements we have signed so far. We are not starting from the beginning. At Doha we agreed to open markets and integrate the environment in the forthcoming negotiations of the WTO. At Monterrey the industrialized world pledged increased development assistance. We do not have to re-negotiate all these achievements, as my colleague Minister Schmidt has already stated. We must build further. And, in fact, this is what my country is committed to.

To conclude Mister Chairman, I have to state that Greece takes very seriously its commitments and responsibilities towards the international community. We have drafted our sustainable development strategy and we are on the process of implementing it. We fulfill our international obligations. And I must ensure you that in the first semester of 2003, when we assume the Presidency of the EU, we will work closely with our European and other partners to implement concretely the Johannesburg outcomes.

Thank you Mister Chairman.

The Secretary of the World Summit on Sustainable Development presents his compliments to the distinguished delegates attending the Summit and takes this opportunity to draw their attention to the necessity to adhere to the five-minute time limit on statements for speakers in the general debate in the plenary during the period 2 to 4 September. Distinguished delegates will recall that this is in conformity with decision 2002/PC/2, entitled "Matters relating to the organization of the work of the World Summit on Sustainable Development" taken at the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee.

The Secretary of the Summit would be most grateful if this information could be transmitted to capitals in order to ensure the smooth running of the Summit and to enable all delegations to estimate with accuracy the timing of their respective interventions.

The assistance of delegations in ensuring adherence to this five-minute time limit would be most appreciated by the Secretary, who also wishes to avail himself of this opportunity to reiterate the assurances of his highest consideration.

24 August 2002