



## Press Release of the Forth Sustainability Summit - October 2020



**Press Release by European Cluster on Sustainability Transition:** [UN SDSN Greece](#), [EIT Climate-KIC Hub Greece](#) and [ReSEES Research Laboratory](#), Athens University of Economics and Business

Representatives of government, academia, public and private sector from all over the world gathered live and online for the [Fourth Sustainability Summit for South-East Europe and the Mediterranean](#), organized by [The Economist Events](#) in collaboration with [UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network Greece](#), co-chaired by [Professor Phoebe Koundouri](#) and [Professor Andreas Papandreou](#), [EIT Climate-KIC Hub Greece](#), directed by Professor Koundouri and [EPLO Institute for Sustainable Development](#). Over the years, the Summit has become a seminal platform for sustainability discourse at regional level, with its mobilization of resources and the participation of Prominent international business and finance leaders along with cabinet ministers, academics and Nobel laureates from around the world.

The event took place on 1-2 October and was hosted by the [Divani Apollon Palace & Thalasso](#) where the event was being livestreamed. Together with [Professor Andreas Papandreou](#), National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, co-chair of UN SDSN Greece and [Alasdair Ross](#), director at The Economist Intelligence unit and countries editor with *The Economist's* annual *The World In...* magazine introduced the Summit and welcomed the audience and the prestigious speakers gathered to share their vision and their experience related to sustainable development. In addition, [Katerina Sakellaropoulou](#), H.E. the President of the Hellenic Republic officially inaugurated the event via a recorded message.

At the Gala dinner event, a discussion on “How is Democracy related to Sustainability” took place with Prof. [Phoebe Koundouri](#), Athens University of Economics & Business, president elect European AERE, co-chair, UN SDSN Greece, Prof. [Jeff Sachs](#), president, Sustainable Development Solutions Network, director, Centre for Sustainable Development, Columbia University [George Papandreou](#), president, Socialist International, former prime minister of Greece, member, Global SDSN Leadership Council moderated by **Alasdair Ross**, director, The Economist Intelligence unit, countries editor, *The Economist's* annual *The World In...* publication.

**Jeffrey Sachs**, President of the United Nations Network for Sustainable Development and a professor at Columbia University indicated that “Our democracies are being tested and if they want to prove their worth they will have to start solving problems,”. He also referred to the “multiple and widespread” crises facing humanity and consequently to the “enormous challenges” at the level of governance. The former Prime Minister of Greece, President of the Socialist International and member of the Global SDSN Leadership Council, **George Papandreou**, noted the importance of the standards for sustainable development, which should be framed by the participation of a responsible citizen. He also spoke about the need of free consultation around policies that define the respective development model and referred to the challenge of climate change and the required policies in the energy sector, arguing that production should be transferred - as he said - by the few to the whole society. **Phoebe Koundouri**, Professor at Athens University of Economics & Business, president elect European AERE, co-chair, UN SDSN Greece, introduced her speech by saying that the first known democracy in the world was established in Athens, although back then all adults citizens were required to take an active part in the government. She continued by noting that currently and globally democracy is increasingly marked by distrust of democratic institutions, processes and elected representatives. Prof. Koundouri referred to the four characteristics of the democracy- inclusiveness, popular control, transparency and considered judgement, and clarified that there is not a one-size “democracy model” for all countries, and that each must find the model that works for their circumstances. She also mentioned that according to SDG- 16 there is a need of a global effort underway to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, to provide access to justice for all and to build effective accountable and inclusive institutions. She also refer to “equality of opportunity and access” as a crucial ingredient of modern democracies, while in her capacity as Commissioner of the Lancet Commission on Covid-19 <https://covid19commission.org/commissioners> and co-chair of the jobs-based Green Recovery Task force of the same Commission, she also indicated that social and economic inequalities between people and nations have been brought to light due to COVID- 19 pandemic.



Prof. [Phoebe Koundouri](#), Athens University of Economics & Business, president-elect, European AERE, professor, co-chair, UN SDSN Greece moderated a discussion on “Smart cities and nature-

based solutions for urban areas: The world's most biodiverse cities" with **Kostas Bakoyannis**, mayor of Athens, **Konstantinos Zervas**, mayor of Thessaloniki and **Dimitris Papastergiou**, mayor of Trikala, president, Union of Mayors of Greece (KEDE).

Referring to the relationship between cities and the challenges of biodiversity and resilience, the mayor of Athens, **Kostas Bakoyannis**, spoke about a global problem, but in which the solutions are local. He also talked about a road race between cities to attract visitors, investment and talent. He said that Athens has lagged behind and that an effort is now being made to close the gap from other European cities on three axes: a) liberalization of public space, b) sustainable mobility and c) protection of greenery and the urban environment in general. In this context, he referred to a series of programs and initiatives implemented by the Municipality of Athens. For the "Big Walk" he said that the special urban plan and permanent works will proceed, while he stressed the need for a new balance between car and other means of transport. Finally, he referred to the so-called pocket parks, the new digital services of the Municipality in the pandemic and the interventions in Omonia, Lycabettus, the hill of Philopappos, etc.

The mayor of Thessaloniki, **Konstantinos Zervas**, emphasized the goals of the liberation of public space, sustainable mobility and the protection of the urban environment, stating, however, the difficulties that exist for the implementation of these goals, both in general and especially in the case of Thessaloniki. He referred to the two natural areas that include Thessaloniki, the Thermaic Gulf and the suburban forest and the formation of a body for their management. Also, in the renovation of the TIF, through which a metropolitan park of 60 acres will be created in the city center, in the creation of tree lines and vertical gardens, in the ecological management of rainwater for irrigation of green spaces, as well as in the digital transformation center of the city. Finally, he pointed out that, even if there are resources and people, the regulatory framework creates difficulties in the effort of the local government to achieve its goals.

The mayor of Trikala and president of the Central Union of Greek Municipalities (KEDE), **Dimitris Papastergiou** suggested to see our cities as an ecosystem, while describing participation as the key word. He emphasized that on the occasion of the recent floods in Thessaly, the river systems, the need for their conservation, their relationship with biodiversity in cities but also the need to invest in civil protection and security. People are also part of the biodiversity of cities, he stressed, typically saying that cities were not made to park cars. He referred to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and in particular to the 11th Goal, which concerns cities. Finally, he stressed the need for energy autonomous cities.



Besides their participation as moderators of many sections, Prof. [Phoebe Koundouri](#), Athens University of Economics, elected president of EAERE and co-chair of the United Nations Sustainable

Development Solutions Network (UN SDSN) Greece and [Professor Andreas Papandreou](#), National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, co-chair of UN SDSN Greece more specifically, referred to the following.

Prof. [Phoebe Koundouri](#), Athens University of Economics, elected president of EAERE and co-chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UN SDSN) Greece, spoke about the "double tsunami", referring to the pandemic and the recession. She stressed that climate change affects all countries of the world and referred to European goals in terms of sustainable development, climate and "green" transition. She also referred to the EU recovery plan, which she described as "good news", which she said also applies to accelerating digitalisation. Finally, Prof. Koundouri referred specifically to the SDSN initiatives in a number of areas.



The goals and initiatives of UN SDSN and SDSN Greece were mentioned by the co-chair of Sustainable Development Solutions Network Greece (SDSN Greece) and professor of National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, [Andreas Papandreou](#). Mr. Papandreou emphasized the relationship between Covid-19 and sustainability. He spoke of governments' lack of preparedness to deal with both epidemics and climate change, despite warnings from scientists, and stressed the need to have confidence in the scientific community. "Among other sustainability goals, climate change leaves us with very narrow timeframes," he said. He spoke about the need for global cooperation and effective governance at an unprecedented level, as well as the need for a change in our way of life, a change that is possible, as evidenced by the pandemic. Mr. Papandreou pointed out that there is no luxury in postponing the achievement of sustainability in order to face other crises. Finally, he cited China's announcement that it would become carbon neutral by 2060 as an important development.



Also Participated:

### INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY LEADERS

- **Amartya Sen**, Thomas W. Lamont University professor, professor of economics and philosophy, Harvard University, Nobel Memorial Prize laureate in Economic Sciences



- **Jeffrey Sachs**, president, Sustainable Development Solutions Network, director, Centre for Sustainable Development, Columbia University
- **H.S.H. Prince Albert II**, Sovereign Prince of Monaco (via connection)

### NATIONAL POLITICIANS

- **Kostis Hatzidakis**, minister of environment and energy, Greece



- **Ioannis Plakiotakis**, minister of maritime and island policy, Greece



- **Haris Theocharis**, minister of Tourism, Greece





- **Notis Mitarachis**, minister of migration and asylum, Greece



- **Aaron Farrugia**, minister for the environment, climate change and planning, Malta
- **George Koumoutsakos**, alternate minister for migration and asylum, Greece



- **Kostas Skrekas**, deputy minister, Ministry of Rural Development and Food, Greece



- **George Papandreou**, president, Socialist International, former prime minister of Greece, member, Global SDSN Leadership Council
- **Socrates Famellos**, former alternate minister of environment and energy, Greece
- **Louka Katseli**, professor emeritus, University of Athens, former minister of labour and social security, Greece
- **Athanasios Kyriazis**, secretary-general for research and technology, Ministry of Development and Investments
- **Kostas Bakoyannis**, mayor of Athens
- **Konstantinos Zervas**, mayor of Thessaloniki
- **Dimitris Papastergiou**, mayor of Trikala, president, Union of Mayors of Greece (KEDE)

## LEADERS FROM BUSINESS, NGOs, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

- **Margaritis Schinas**, vice-president for promoting our European way of life, European Commission



- **Dimitri Papalexopoulos**, chairman of the BoD, Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV)
- **Alexandra Mitsotaki**, president, Action Finance Initiative-AFI, co-founder, World Human Forum



- **Angelo Riccaboni**, chair, PRIMA Foundation, chair, SDSN Mediterranean, professor, University of Siena
- **Maria Damanaki**, special adviser for SYSTEMIQ and paradise foundation, former commissioner, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
- **Carleen Lyden Walker**, co-founder, executive director, North American Marine Environment Protection Association, NAMEPA, IMO maritime ambassador
- **Riccardo Lambiris**, chief executive officer & member of the board of directors, Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund
- **Andreea Strachinescu**, head of maritime innovation, marine knowledge & Investment Unit, European Commission
- **Abdelmalek Alaoui**, founding CEO, Guepard Group
- **Triant Flouris**, executive director, Center of Excellence in Logistics Shipping & Transportation, The American College of Greece, professor of management, Deree – The American College of Greece
- **Khalid Koser**, member of the board, Andan Foundation, Switzerland
- **Yolanda Martin**, platform ecosystem design director, Kaluza, UK
- **Maria Sotiriou**, EU affairs and policy engagement, GSMA
- **Konstantinos Liolios**, software development engineer II, Amazon USA
- **Christina Deligianni**, public policy officer, EPLO Institute for Sustainable Development
- **Jonathan Hughes**, chief executive officer, UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre
- **Marco Springmann**, senior researcher on environmental sustainability and public health, Oxford Martin Programme on the Future of Food and the Nuffield Department of Population Health, University of Oxford
- **Masamichi Kono**, deputy secretary-general, OECD
- **Nikitas Pittis**, professor, University of Piraeus
- **Spyros Kouvelis**, director, EPLO Institute for Sustainable Development
- **Hans-Otto Poertner**, senior scientist, section head, Alfred Wegener Institute, Germany
- **Nikos Tserkezidis**, CEO, Recycle Greece
- **Myrto Dimitriou**, origami instructor, holder of 2 Guinness World Records, designer of paper clothes and accessories
- **Pavlina Proteou**, president & CEO, Beyond CSR
- **Stelios Bollanos**, co-founder & director, Planetek Hellas, vice-chairman, Hellenic Association of Space Industries

Watch the Summit at the following links:

- **Summit in English**  
<https://www.facebook.com/TheEconomistSEEuropeEvents/videos/2741523279404940/>
- **Summit in Greek**  
<https://www.facebook.com/TheEconomistSEEuropeEvents/videos/2026568724144853/>
- **Gala Dinner English**  
<https://www.facebook.com/TheEconomistSEEuropeEvents/videos/344434216798673/>
- **Gala dinner Greek**  
<https://www.facebook.com/TheEconomistSEEuropeEvents/videos/3488740917851291/>

Summit overview:

[https://www.hazliseconomist.com/en/event/Fourth\\_Sustainability\\_Summit/overview](https://www.hazliseconomist.com/en/event/Fourth_Sustainability_Summit/overview)

Learn more at: <http://www.unsdsn.gr/the-fourth-sustainability-summit-for-south-east-eu>

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