

EESC "Geopolitics of the European Green Deal" Conference

6 December 2021, 09:30-17:30 hrs

Teleconference*Opening Remarks***Mr. Dimitris DIMITRIADIS – President of the EESC External Relations Section (REX)**

Mr. DIMITRIADIS welcomed the participants and wished for a fruitful meeting. He underlined that the organisation of the Conference took 8 months and 5 EESC's were involved. He congratulated on the excellent cooperation. The Conference will be organised in 4 panels:

1. Leading climate change efforts
2. Ensuring the green energy transition and heading towards open strategic autonomy
3. Ensuring that the EGD leaves no one behind
4. Maintaining the EU industry's global competitiveness and directing financing to support the green transition.

Mrs. Christa SCHWENG – EESC President

Mrs. SCHWENG stated she was honoured to host the Conference. She briefly recalled that global warming is a serious problem that affects the whole society. She stated that the green transition is crucial to ensure the survival of humankind. The role of civil society organisations is key in the green transition to ensure no one is left behind.

Mrs. Kadri SIMSON – EU Commissioner for Energy

Mrs. SIMSON opened her speech by saying that the discussion on the European Green Deal (EGD) is crucial. Reducing methane emission, energy performance of buildings, etc, ...are some of the examples the EU Commission is working on. She added that the European Green Deal is also about a competitive economy. It will create new growth, new jobs, and opportunities. She stated that the EU should rely more on local resources and become more independent. The EU is currently shutting down domestic fuel emissions. Mrs. SIMSON highlighted the importance of long-term solutions, such as making energy prices affordable and reducing fossil fuels.

Mrs. Barbara POMPILI – Minister for the Ecological Transition, French Presidency of the EU Council

[/www.gouvernement.fr/](http://www.gouvernement.fr/)

Mrs. POMPILI stated that the European Green Deal and the green transition are impacting the geopolitics of our time. The EU should be in line and provide new models to adapt to the green transition. The Green Deal is a plan for all sectors. The EU should work actively with producing companies and value chains to ensure the problems we are solving in the EU are exported elsewhere. Mrs. POMPILI stated that trade will not be above the environment anymore. She then added that the lesson learnt from COVID-19 is clear: the EU must produce locally and rely on its own resources. She concluded by saying that the next Presidency (FR) of the Council of the EU will be committed to this issue.

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Mr. Costas SYNOLAKIS – Chair of the Greek Scientific Committee on Climate Change, and President of Athens College, Hellenic-American Educational Foundation (HAEF)

Mr. SYNOLAKIS briefly summarised what has been done in Greece in the last year. HAEF supported several inputs in EU climate law. The Scientific Council of GR got acquainted with agencies that work on climate issues, etc... Now the new climate law is currently under discussion in GR Government. Wildfires, floods, etc... have demonstrated that climate change is real. The Greek climate law will pursue climate neutrality by 2050 and an intermediate goal of 8% emissions reduction by 2040. He added that a national strategy has been delineated. He then briefly touched upon the current initiatives of the Greek Government. By 2023, no new oil heating will be sold. By 2025, natural gas connections will be established. A compulsory insurance for national houses has been introduced. In its annual report to the Greek Parliament, the Government stated that 1/3 of the seas will be marine protected areas.

Panel 1 “Leading climate change efforts”, moderated by Mr. Peter SCHMIDT, President of the Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment (NAT), EESC**Mr. Bruno POZZI – Director, Europe Office, UNEP (UN Environment Programme)**

www.unep.org/

Mr POZZI stated that we are facing a climate crisis but also a crisis of biodiversity and pollution. The UN report on those issue was published just before COP26. In this report, pollution and waste are causing the death of lots of people. He added that the world needs to replan its fossil fuel dependency, to protect nature and biodiversity. He believes that there are two key values to be considered. The first is sustainability of our actions; the second solidarity and social justice. The EU and its members states have the power to address these problems, but multilateral transition is needed. The EGD is important and might be a model for other continents, such as Africa. He added that the EU should push the ideology and a change in mindset as well. The key issue remains now the implementation of the EGD.

Mr. Marco MORETTINI – EEAS Deputy Head of Division GLOBAL G13 Green Transition

[/eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en](http://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en)

Mr. MORETTINI addressed the importance of the external dimension of the EGD. Last January, The Council adopted conclusions on “Climate and Energy Diplomacy - Delivering on the external dimension of the European Green Deal”. In its conclusions the Council recognises that climate change is an existential threat to humanity. It notes that global climate action still falls short of what is required to achieve the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The conclusions of the Council are available online.

Mr. MORETTINI stated that Africa is a region where the EU efforts should be more proactive. Africa is going to be the continent where progresses on climate mitigation are supported by social policies. The next EU-Africa Summit in 2022 needs to be a success. The dialogue is strategic also with Western Balkans, where pollution and climate change are a serious problem.

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EEAS is working close also with Mediterranean states on climate resilience, energy transition,

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As to the Eastern partnership: EEAS is putting efforts to accompany the reforms with financial resources. In the past 9 months, EEAS made a special effort to try to explain to its partners the measures. As to South Africa partnership (South Africa is depending a lot on coal), essential measures have been put in place. He added that a comprehensive package of financial measures (grants) needs to be accompanied by technological knowhow and expertise for a just transition.

Mrs. Johanna SANDAHL – President, European Environmental Bureau

[/eeb.org/](http://eeb.org/)

The EEB is the largest network of environmental citizens' organisations in Europe. It currently consists of over 170 member organisations in more than thirty-five countries (all EU Member States plus some accession and neighbouring countries), including a growing number of European networks, and representing some thirty million individual members and supporters. EEB tackles Europe's most pressing environmental problems by agenda setting, monitoring, advising on and influencing the way the EU deals with these issues. These include issues such as climate change, biodiversity, circular economy, air, water, soil, chemical pollution, as well as policies on industry, energy, agriculture, product design and waste prevention, among others. EEB are also active on overarching issues as sustainable development, good governance, participatory democracy, and the rule of law in Europe and beyond.

Mrs. SANDAHL stated that COP26 just ended, and the commitment of world leaders is not sufficient. Results were not attained. The EU must ensure that the ambition is respected in all sectors. Scaling up renewable energies, financial tools to be implemented. Polluted principles to be applied effectively. Improve energy efficiency performance. She added that new pressure should be put on natural resources because of reducing dependency on fossil fuels means also reducing impact on the global ecosystem. The EU must set binding targets to reduce the extraction of raw material, environmental problems, and human rights in the global south.

Dr Muhammad Hidayat Greenfield – IUF Regional Secretary

[/www.iuf.org/](http://www.iuf.org/)

Mr. Hidayat Greenfield stated that IUF really welcomed the EGD. The goal now is to extend this to as many countries as possible. The main issue is to create an enabling environment. The EGD runs against cooperate deals. Instead of examining if the EGD is compatible with multi and bilateral relations, enabling environment for other countries should be created. He added that the EGD is currently a trade barrier. Another issue is animal protein overconsumption: this industry causes a lot of diseases around the world. Climate change should be treated also considering this issue of animal protein overconsumption, since a lot of countries in the world are relying on this industry.

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Dr Hubertus BARDT – German Economic Institute[/www.iwkoeln.de/en/](http://www.iwkoeln.de/en/)

Mr. BARDT focused on four aspects:

1. Natural Gas: Russia is the most important supplier. What does it mean for political relations? Is a temporary political lever? On the long term: when decarbonising the EU, Russia will not use the EU as a market anymore. Energy trade as stabilising factor will vanish.
2. Crude oil: Middle East: Potential loss of revenues, this natural reason is the main revenue. Middle Eastern countries are trying to swift to other resources. Reduced political relevance of the world region?
3. Hydrogen: Russia, MENA: Opportunity to replace fossil energy resources exports, to develop additional value chains based on H2. Political stability as a potential result, but especially as a precondition.
4. Carbon trade: China and USA: Significant risks of trade conflicts because of unilateral border pricing (CBAM). Global approach will hardly deliver a uniform global carbon price level. Sector trade clubs (with carbon price level for 90% of the global production) may be feasible as economic significance of a single sector is smaller.

Panel 2 “Ensuring the green energy transition and heading towards open strategic autonomy”, moderated by Mrs. Baiba MILTOVICA, President of the Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society (TEN), EESC

Keynote Speaker Mr. Alessandro BLASI – Special Advisor to Executive Director, International Energy Agency (IEA)[/www.iea.org/](http://www.iea.org/)

Mr. BLASI stated that extreme floods and heat in Europe are a demonstration of climate change. The EU needs even more clean energy policies. IEA believes that COP26 achieved a lot, as to commitment of countries on climate neutralities, but a lot of work must be done. He added that national collaboration is crucial for the green transition. The EU has been at the forefront of the climate change, now engaging with other countries is key.

Mr. Mauro Raffaele PETRICCIONE – Director-General, DG CLIMA, European Commission

Mr. PETRICCIONE stated that the EGD means a lot more now. It means having climate law and trajectories into legal obligations for member states. The EGD is a deep change in our society. Europe is not an island; we are a big part of the global community. Our objectives are simple: achieving the goal of the Paris agreement. The EU wants to offer a working module on how to

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build a climate neutral society. The EGD has a deep geopolitical impact in carrying the transformation. It impacts on three dimensions. The first is on economic. The rise in energy prices is the last of a long series of events started in 1970 (oil shocks), the EU has been suffering instability from that day. Our answer is then green economy. The second element is the dependency on fossil fuels, whereas the EU can spend money more productively. The third one is security related: climate change has a dramatic impact on economies in the third world and this can lead to crisis.

Professor Andris PIEBALGS – Senior Fellow, Florence School of Regulation, and former Commissioner for Energy and for Development

[/fsr.eui.eu/](https://fsr.eui.eu/)

Prof. PIEBALGS stated that the EU should transform the society. Geopolitics of the EGD goes far beyond the Deal itself. 75% of greenhouse gas emission are related to production and consumption of energies. The EU dependency has grown to 60%. Prof. PIEBALGS claimed that hydrogen base, solar, etc will be the future. It is important now to accelerate the global energy transition, to foster intern trade, to diminish geopolitical and security challenges on the transition. Prof. PIEBALGS stated that there is the need to mitigate the volatility of the transitional period. This might be achieved with green supply chains, new standards for clean energy and with a balance between competition of production elements and strategic interests. He added that the growth of electrification of energy system might be an opportunity of cooperation. E.g., the EU offshore Sea wind energy production might involve UK, Norway, and North Africa countries. He stated that Africa is a single electricity market and a new challenge of investment. He concluded by saying that the new trade of hydrogen is different from oil and gas trade.

Mr. Kyriakos GIALOGLU – Director of Government Affairs, Seawind Ocean Technology & Managing Director Seawind Greece

[/seawindtechnology.com/](https://seawindtechnology.com/)

Mr. GIALOGLU stated that the COP26 was not a big success, it is a call to arms. As to the green transition, the world is looking at Europe. He stated that technology of offshore wind energy is considered also outside Europe. 80% of offshore wind is floating, it not possible under 60 metres to be funded by NGOs. Seawind mission is to become a global leader in developing and deploying the most economic, safe, and sustainable offshore wind farm technologies for all seas and oceans, including cyclonic regions. We're making great strides towards achieving this through our innovative and cost-efficient solutions that have been patented, proven, and have achieved first phase certification. Seawind rely on regional supply chains. The materials are sourced locally. This is important for costs and national context and contributes to offering local jobs.

Mrs. Mika OHBAYASHI – Director, Renewable Energy Institute

[/www.renewable-ei.org/en/](https://www.renewable-ei.org/en/)

Mrs. OHBAYASHI stated that the EGD is key to avoid the climate crisis. She added that the energy transition is important for everyone. JP is working on these issues. Recently, the target of carbon neutrality by 2050 has been declared. This target sets a fundamental transition for JP. In JP, renewable energies increased from 10 to 20% in last decade, but fossil occupies around 70%

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of JP's generation. The important thing is to phase-out coal and accelerated renewable energies, especially solar and wind power. She added that half of JP's greenhouse gas emissions come from 130 very large facilities. Of these, 78 are thermal power stations, accounting for about one third of JP's emissions. More than half of thermal power emissions are from coal-fired plants, the majority of which are 38 large coal-fired power stations. The second largest source of emissions is steel industry. She briefly touched upon the sixth basic energy plan electricity composition in JP. She stated that to achieve a decarbonised world by 2050, there must be a dramatic increase in renewable energies and a shift to a sustainable energy mix by 2030.

Panel 3 "Ensuring that the European Green Deal leaves no one behind", moderated by Mr. Laurențiu PLOSCEANU, President of the Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship (SOC), EESC

Keynote Speaker Dr Njuguna NDUNG'U, Executive Director, African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)

[/aercafrica.org/](http://aercafrica.org/)

Dr NDUNG'U stated that geopolitical dimension of the EGD leaves no one behind. AERC approach to capacity building and knowledge generations in sub-Saharan Africa. The external dimension of the EGD focuses on climate mitigation. Yet it is not true that African countries prioritise climate adaptation and socio-economic issues such as job creation? How do we reconcile this?

He briefly recalled the main points of the EGD and its importance. As to the external dimension of the EGD, the EU Development Cooperation initiatives to support the EGD plan include several initiatives:

- 1) the Africa-EU Green Energy Initiative
- 2) the EU support for project that will facilitate the transition from fossil fuels to sustainable energy
- 3) The Eu support for international development of qualitative infrastructure
- 4) The Global Climate Change Alliance Plus (GCCA+)
- 5) The EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan
- 6) The Eu Green Alliances
- 7) Farm to Fork Strategy (F2F)

He then added that there are still diverging priorities between developed and developing countries. EGD will disproportionately affect countries and therefore the EU should engage with countries to manage the repercussions of the EGD.

He then proposed some solutions to reduce the gap between developed and developing countries regarding the priorities. One example is that the EU should work with its developing partners to ensure all initiatives are locally accepted and coherent with partners countries' priorities by applying a bottom-up, inclusive, and equitable approach.

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Mrs. Carla MONTESI – Director, Green Deal & Digital Agenda, DG INTPA, European Commission

Mrs. MONTESI stated that the divergent priorities that exist between developed and developing countries are an issue INTPA is working on. INTPA really wants to work with partners and divergent priorities need to be joint priorities. COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated that things are more serious now. People displaced by natural disasters and climate change is a real issue. INTPA needs to take care of its most vulnerable partners. It is important that the implementation is accompanied by initiatives and programmes with involved partners, with a bottom-up approach. The EU Commission is working not only on mitigation but also on adaptation.

Mrs. Maja HANDJISKA-TRENDAFILOVA – Head of Program Department, Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)

[/www.rcc.int/](http://www.rcc.int/)

Mrs. HANDJISKA-TRENDAFILOVA stated that the EGD demonstrated that the EU has been the leader of the green transition. Transforming the EU models is also changing the geopolitics. As to Western Balkans, the Agenda has been anticipated. Western Balkans are a vulnerable area, where energy relies on lignite facilities (more than 30 years old and exceeding the emissions). During the Western Balkans Sofia Summit, held on 10 November 2020, region reached important milestone by endorsing the Leaders' Declaration on the Green Agenda that aligns with EU Green Deal. Declaration is to support and accelerate changes and processes in the region with the overarching goal of addressing climate change. The Sofia Declaration is an example of successful regional cooperation. As a further step, developing green steps in the agenda is key. The Balkan Barometer (RCC) showed that 91% of people in Western Balkans think that climate change is a serious problem. She then gave few examples of good practises in the region: e.g., transition from coal, wastewater management, Montenegro carbon taxes, regional agreement to prevent pollution, regional smart mobility strategy.

Dr. Niels KEIJZER – Senior Researcher, Team Lead: EU development policy and external action, German Development Institute (DIE)

[/www.die-gdi.de/en/](http://www.die-gdi.de/en/)

Mr. KEIJZER stated that Europe is committed to be the first continent of climate neutrality, but we must be careful in saying "Europe", since it contains, for instance, also Western Balkans. The agenda should be universally applicable. He touched upon three points

- 1) It is unclear how national policies will contribute to the implementation of the EGD
- 2) The EU should invest more in dialogue (with a bottom-up approach)
- 3) Integrated approach (not only intern and external) is required

He then stated that developing economies are recovering from the previous crisis (2008) and now from COVID-19 and this might represent an issue.

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Mrs. Nina BIRKELAND – Senior Advisor on Disaster Displacement and Climate Change, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

[/www.nrc.no/](http://www.nrc.no/)

Mrs. BIRKELAND briefly explained the relationship between the EGD and displacement. She stated that many more people are facing displacement. She stated that NRC is working on increased vulnerability for displaced people and on disaster displacement. She then shared the map on internal displacement updates, created by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (available here: [/www.internal-displacement.org/global-displacement-map](http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-displacement-map)).

She then stated that very few concrete links with displacement are present in the EGD. She claimed that there are other initiatives that consider the problem of displacement, namely Sendai Framework 2015-2030. It establishes tools to help policy makers and practitioners on disaster displacement issues. She advocated for an integration of displacement into national and regional policies and strategies. She then supported few recommendations for the EU and its members states when implementing the EGD:

- 1) To address protection gap for cross border disaster displaced people
- 2) To scale up support to countries experiencing displacement
- 3) To increase investment in climate change adaptation
- 4) To sign up on the climate and environment charter for humanitarian organisations

She added that in Africa people can flee without asking for visa, if displaced.

Panel 4 “Maintaining the EU's industry's global competitiveness and directing financing to support the green transition”, moderated by Stefano Palmieri, President of the Section for Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion (ECO), EESC

Mrs. Sirpa PIETIKÄINEN – Member of the European Parliament, Member of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON)

Mrs. PIETIKÄINEN stated that the technology is an important element to push the economy, but the investments should be made wisely. In environmental terms, the rating should be negative if the environmental policy is not respected. This must be respected in the European mechanism, to stop the investments that are not green. Without a circular economy, there is loss of biodiversity. The EU and its members states are working on the directive on the long life of products, reusable recyclable etc. This must happen in Europe, where we are too dependent on the fluctuation of resource prices. Public support and circular economy are two elements that should come hand in hand.

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Mr. Nathan FABIAN – Chair of the European Platform on Sustainable Finance, Chief Responsible Investment Officer at the United Nations-supported Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI)[/www.unpri.org/](http://www.unpri.org/)

Mr. FABIAN stated that sustainable finance reforms in Europe are also competitiveness reforms. Europe should take steps forward on sustainable finance, replacing the traditional one. He added that if we look at taxonomy approach, we must remember planetary boundaries set the boundaries of the economies. The financial system reform approach influences the global markets. He stated that competitiveness should be that our capital (invested on behalf of Europe) must pay return on pensions. A much more integrated approach is needed to tackle present issues. Green value chains are the future of the economy and jobs should be re-skilled. He concluded by saying that the market is expecting high risk premium from fossil fuels investment than green investments. As to the role on insurance on green investments, Mr. FABIAN stated that insurance is made for not having risks. Alliances are committed to PRI portfolio and to reduce emission reductions in their own portfolio as well. The taxonomy is risking, therefore, much more progress is needed on investments side.

Dr Oyun SANJAASUREN – Director of External Affairs, Green Climate Fund[/www.greenclimate.fund/](http://www.greenclimate.fund/)

Dr SANJAASUREN stated that the EU pioneers in the EGD. It has shown a great example to the world on how to reduce emissions. She stated that South Korea adopted the New Green Deal this year. In developing countries there is still a high demand in low carbon climate resilience. There are also barriers that might be political, economic, regulatory and/or technical on the process. She then added that public investment must catalyse private sector investments. Those investments must be de-risked. For instance, to de-risk those investments: GCF is accepting higher risk to support developing projects. She concluded by saying that competitiveness to the financial sector must be pursued both in the EU and abroad.

She added that GCF is getting close to its objectives on the green climate change. GCF is working on farmers issues, on mitigation and on adaptation. 50% of GCF funding go to adaptation, especially in Africa.

Dr Guntram B. WOLFF – Director of Bruegel[/www.bruegel.org/](http://www.bruegel.org/)

Dr WOLFF stated that three issues must be considered, while implementing the EGD:

- 1) The need for investments, since mostly come from the private sector
- 2) The lack of progress in capital markets. Tech gap to decarbonise our economies
- 3) Public investments must be reinforced. Only 1/4 of investments in energy and transition are done by public sector in the EU
- 4) International dimension of the EGD must not be forget: the EU cannot save global climate of its own
- 5) The EU should also support global decarbonisation

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He briefly touched upon the “Green Golden Rule”, stating that more information might be found on Bruegel website (www.bruegel.org/2021/09/a-green-fiscal-pact-climate-investment-in-times-of-budget-consolidation/).

Wrap-up and closing remarks

Dr Phoebe KOUNDOURI – Co-Chair of United Nations Sustainable Development Network (SDSN)

www.unsdsn.org/

Mrs. KOUNDOURI stated that we are facing a triple planetary crisis. We need to raise our ambition to fight climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Multilateralism, not divisive geopolitics, is the solution. The EU is a Union based on values. Sustainability and solidarity can be the values that guide the EGD to ensure a better future for our planet and its citizens. In Glasgow the EU contributed to the launch of several strategic initiatives:

- The Global Methane Pledge (GMP): 1110 countries are committed to cut methane emissions by at least 30% by 2030
- The Just Energy Transition Partnership with South Africa: with UK, EU, US, FR, De support. It is a blueprint for accelerating a just transition around the world
- The Eu support to the Global Forests Finance Pledge to protect, restore and sustainably manage forests worldwide
- New Pledge of EUR100 million in finance for the Climate Adaptation Fund

Now there is a stronger commitment to reduce emissions and to keep global temperature rise to 1.5 Celsius degree. From the project 4 Celsius degree faced before Paris, we now edged towards 2-1,8 °C. 450 Business and Financial Institutions set up a coalition worth \$130 trillion vows to put climate at heart of finance. Global standards body takes aim at company “greenwashing” claims. Developed countries confirm commitment \$100 billion goal a year for Climate Mitigation and Adaptation in developing countries.

She also added that we must stop postponing the end of the fossil fuel area, must address social injustices and ensure that the principles of historical responsibility and equity are truly met. Economic and financial models should consider climate neutrality, biodiversity resilience and health system resilience. Risks of trade conflicts caused by unilateral border adjustment measures must be considered. Potential destabilisation effects of higher natural gas imports from RU in a transition period should be faced. Additional opportunities of hydrogen-based value chains in the traditional energy export countries as well as in Northern Africa might be a solution. The EU needs to further define the different external dimensions of the EGD and promote an integrated approach. Namely:

- Promoting the EGD in bilateral and regional development cooperation
- Ensuring coherence and addressing negative spill-overs both in the Union’s trade and domestic policies

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- The EU global leadership in a multilateral approach

As to Western Balkans, the Green Agenda can unlock the region's potential of circular economy, translating in more jobs and much needed growth prospects. Significant EU finances are therefore needed. She added that there are many people displaced due to climate change. This undermines development. There is the need to address protection gaps for cross border disaster displaced people and increase support to countries experiencing displacement. More investments are needed in climate change adaptation.

She concluded by saying that the global investment gap is estimated \$14.9 to \$30 trillion worldwide between 2035 and 2040. Therefore, public resources will not be sufficient anymore. Efforts to address the impact of COVID-19 have led to sharp increases in sovereign debt, downgrades in credit ratings, and rising interest rates. As fiscal space shrinks, increasing attention is being given to the role of new financing instruments.

Mr. Dimitris DIMITRIADIS – President of the Section for External Relations (REX), European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

Mr. DIMITRIADIS then closed the meeting and thank all the participants for their involvement.