

"The city of Patras to current challenges arising from the impacts of climate change and economic crisis of the Greek"

Ioannis Dimaras , Mayor of Patras

Lord Mayor of Venice,
Honorable representatives of the UN
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I Welcome with great pleasure this International Event on Resilient Cities and would like thank you very much for inviting me personally and the City of Patras to participate and to present our experience in the new situation which be created a cause of the economic crisis in my country and its impacts almost visible in all areas of everyday life.

Greece is giving its own tough battle to face major economic test that is primarily concerned citizens themselves, who are experiencing particularly critical situations ...

In this struggle, a struggle of all citizens of Europe against the decisions taken by policy makers to shrink the quality of life, mortgage their future and reduce the welfare state, is necessary the unity and the common struggle of all, without prejudices, without entrenchments.

So, from this podium, I call on everyone to support Greece in this long and difficult race, who, like all shows, it is a struggle that will soon be asked to give other countries – EU members.

But let's get to our topic, that is the impact of climate change coupled with the economic crisis

Dear Friends,

The new global economic crisis is a fact. Globally we are witnessing a violent and unprecedented redistribution of income at the expense of weaker economic strata. This phenomenon is even more pronounced in Greece of the Memorandum.

The global crisis that occurs in parallel with environmental is not only economic but also ecological and food.

In this situation, issues of environmental protection, threatened to become the first victim of the economic crisis.

The risk of losing summarily conquests environmental protection, on the grounds of the need for easy deployment and excuse their jobs at any cost, is the alarm signal emitted especially in our country where survival is already in trouble of a great part of the population .

The economic crisis comes at the same time sits menacingly on chronic problems that undermine the environment and quality of life. These delays in incorporating EU Directives, enforcement problems, chronic problems and entanglements at the administrative level, over-simplifying environmental permitting procedures for specific investment and other sectors.

The current economic crisis is threat for worsening the existing environmental crisis, especially if the environment seen as a resource to use and easy and the legislative restrictions as an obstacle to be overcome. On the contrary, must be an opportunity for a comprehensive review of the institutional framework and administrative system of environmental protection as an essential basis for sustainable economic and social development.

This is the big challenge for governments around the world.

This is the big challenge for our country to respect the environment.

The global challenge of climate change is here and no one should be forgotten. No one should place to the secondary. It is the greatest

environmental challenge facing human civilization. Greenhouse gas emissions from human activities, primarily carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels, which is responsible for two thirds of total emissions increase exponentially and threaten to destabilize the global climate.

Such a development, of which the first effects are already visible will have tragic consequences for people and society as a whole. Such as increases in sea level, the occurrence of extreme weather conditions, extended droughts and desertification land in the Mediterranean region.

Tackling climate change and its effects puts in a tremendous strain governments worldwide and should remain a top priority for the European Union.

The involvement of local government in achieving its objectives is vital. The role of local government in these new conditions can be multidimensional as holds the roles of consumer and responsible for providing services, the authority which plans, of development and regulation, consultant and animator, and of course the producer and supplier.

The Municipality of Patras, despite the very serious financial problems a cause of the economic crisis and the huge funding problem that literally strangles economically self-government authorities in our country remains deeply sensitive to environmental issues.

Patras is made great efforts to participate actively in action against on climate change in our region.

The aim of these measures is the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, which has many benefits of reducing air pollution and later indirectly contribute to improving air quality.

The main directions of this Action Package are the following :

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions taking into account economic, technical and administrative capabilities of the municipality and other stakeholders.

- Improve the quality of life in the region, since many of the interventions are related to other environmental issues like air quality, transport management, management of wastewater and solid waste and planning of public space.
- To prepare the region to better adapt to climate change.

More specifically, Municipality of Patras has taken a series of measures, some of which have been implemented and others are underway.

These are:

- Validate a Strategic Action Plan on Climate Change Adaptation.
- Validate Sustainable Energy Management Plan.
- New City Urban Plan adapted to new realities.
- Establishment, operation and staffing of the Office for Civil Protection.
- Management Plan Response of forest fires in suburban forests.
- Plan-protection and management of protected areas.
- Claim and grant of the former port area to be regenerated, to improve quality of life.
- Create pedestrian-networks
- Create traffic – calmed roads
- Create a wide network of bike-paths
- Regulation of double parking on the streets of increased traffic.
- Increase of open spaces and green areas
- Establishment of a suburban railway transport, etc.

We believe that all this will significantly improve the quality of life and ensuring ecological balance, including both natural resources and cultural heritage, which has become a central objective of the development process. The restoration of the relationship between the natural element and the artificial element of the city is a prerequisite for promoting sustainable development. For this purpose, the city should be understood as a single system with the surrounding area, while the diagnosis of the condition of the natural environment is the first step to understanding and troubleshooting.

This would also enable the city of Patras to establish international strategic role in the Ionian - Adriatic and Southeastern Europe, in a frame that will promote competition, innovation, social cohesion and equal opportunities.

Thank you for your attention