

Press Release by

[UN SDSN Greece](#)

[EIT Climate-KIC Hub Greece](#)

**Representatives of government, academia, public and private sector from all over the world gathered in Athens for the Third Sustainability Summit for south-east Mediterranean, organized by The Economist Events and UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network Greece, in association with EIT Climate-KIC Hub Greece, UN SDSN Mediterranean, and UN SDSN Black Sea.**

Hosting network: [UN SDSN Greece](#)

The Economist Events and the [UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network Greece](#), co-chaired by [Professor Phoebe Koundouri](#) and [Professor Andreas Papandreou](#), in association with [EIT Climate-KIC Hub Greece](#), directed by Professor Koundouri, [UN SDSN Black Sea](#) and [UN SDSN Mediterranean](#), organized the Third Sustainability Summit for south-east Mediterranean. 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 innovators, scholars, policy makers and civil society to lead sustainability transition.

The event took place on 16-17 October and was hosted by the [Goulandris Natural History Museum](#), founded in 1964 and since then a leading center for environmental culture and education in the country. Together with [Professor Andreas Papandreou](#), National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, co-chair of UN SDSN Greece, and [John Andrews](#), consultant editor of The Economist, the president of the Museum **Fali Voyatzaki** introduced the Summit and welcomed the audience and the prestigious speakers coming



*Prof. Phoebe Koundouri, Athens University of Economics and Business, co-chair UN SDSN Greece, director EIT Climate-KIC Hub Greece, President Elect of the European Association of Environmental*



*Welcome remarks by Prof. Andreas Papandreou, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, co-chair UN SDSN Greece, Mr. John Andrews, consultant editor, The Economist*

from all over the world, gathered to share their vision and their experience related to sustainable development.

Professor Andreas Papandreou, during his welcome remarks, highlighted the need for a holistic approach towards sustainability, based on the participation of public and private actors. Indeed, the combined role of sustainability-oriented financial system, investment system, business leadership, organization, and territorial management emerged as a priority during the event.



*The opening speech by Fali Voyatzaki, president, Goulandris Natural History Museum. Credits: Stavros Giannoulis Photography Videography*

The role of Central Banks in this direction was highlighted by the governor of the Bank of Greece **Yannis Stournaras**, guest of honor and keynote speaker, while other aspects related to public governance such as migration and security were analyzed during the first panel of the event on **Sustainability and Governance**, with the participation of **Giorgos Koumoutsakos**, alternate minister for migration policy of Greece.



*In the picture on the left, the speech of Yannis Stournaras, governor of the Bank of Greece. On the right, Giorgos Koumoutsakos, alternate minister for migration policy of Greece. Credits: Stavros Giannoulis Photography Videography*

The main **Environmental and sustainability challenges** were then analyzed, with a focus on close connection between technology, innovation and common good: the interdependence of the three elements was highlighted as a core aspect by **Alexandra Mitsotaki**, president of Action Finance Initiative-AFI and co-founder of the World Human Forum. The panel saw the participation of **George Pechlivanoglou**, vice president of **Eunice Energy Group** and chairman of Wind Energy Committee ASME. In his speech, he referred to the importance of hybrid energy systems for the islands, taking Tilos as a virtuous example.



*Harry Theoharis, minister of tourism of Greece, during his speech. Credits: Stavros Giannoulis Photography Videography*

The discussion then focused on **Blue economy and circular economy** and on the potential of Greece as a leading country in Mediterranean blue economic growth. **Harry Theoharis**, minister of tourism of Greece, emphasized the role of incentives to improve sustainability in tourism, especially along Greek coasts. As reported by [The Economist Events for Greece, Cyprus, Malta and south-eastern Europe](#), **Socrates Famellos**, former alternate minister of environment and energy, referred to the National Strategy for Circular Economy as a strategic tool to achieve blue economy and circularity objectives, while stressing the need for finalization of regional climate change adaptation plans in most regions.

**Athanasios Polichronopoulos**, executive chairman of **Polyeco Group**, stressed the immediate need to act under the terms of sustainable growth for a greener future, and described the projects of the group related to management of hazardous waste. As remarked by [Professor Phoebe Koundouri](#), Athens University of Economics and Business, co-chair of UN SDSN Greece, President Elect of the European Association of Environmental and Resource Economists, Director of EIT Climate-KIC Greece, efforts in education, technology and innovation, as those made by [EIT Climate-KIC Greece](#), are crucial to achieve sustainability.

The Gala Dinner was opened by the speech of **Kostis Hatzidakis**, Minister of Environment and Energy of Greece, who highlighted the efforts of the Government to reconcile investments with environmental protection, to work on electrical interconnection of Greek islands and to reduce plastic waste.

On the same topic, [Professor Phoebe Koundouri](#) observed that the efforts of the country towards decarbonization are remarkable, although a faster pace is needed.



*Kostis Hatzidakis, minister of environment and energy, Greece, during his keynote address. Credits: Stavros Giannoulis Photography Videography*



*Professor Phoebe Koundouri giving her speech during the Gala dinner. Credits: Stavros Giannoulis Photography Videography*

Later in the evening, [Professor Jeffrey Sachs](#), Columbia University, Director of Global UN SDSN Leadership Council, gave an inspiring speech, in which he acknowledged the valuable efforts of Greece to tackle climate change and referred to relevant initiatives in this direction.



On the left, Jeffrey Sachs, Columbia University, Director of the Global UN SDSN Leadership Council, during his speech. Credits: Stavros Giannoulis Photography Videography. On the right, Gala Dinner, keynote speeches by Prof. Phoebe Koundouri, Prof. Jeffrey Sachs, Mr. George Papandreou, President Socialist International, former Prime minister of Greece, member Global UN SDSN Leadership Council, Mr. John Andrews, consultant editor, *The Economist*

The second day of the event opened with a session on **Smart and zero waste transition**, introduced by **Konstsantinos Aravossis**, general secretary for natural environment and water of the Ministry of Environment and Energy of Greece. Mr. Aravossis emphasized the link between waste reduction, one of the country's challenges for the future, and innovative technology. As mentioned in the press release of [The Economist Events for Greece, Cyprus, Malta and south-eastern Europe](#), he also urged the introduction of a “pay-as-you-throw” principle. Throughout the panel, the transition to zero-waste and smart cities was described as an issue that involves not only cities and municipalities, but also coordination with national policies, involvement of businesses and, ultimately, citizens' engagement.

**Sissy Iliopoulou**, public affairs, communication and sustainability manager for Coca-Cola in Greece, Cyprus and Malta, stressed the importance of developing not only cooperation, but also *co-creation* processes involving citizens and businesses.

The dialogue on sustainability transition necessarily included a session on **Sustainable finance**, another crucial field of action with a potential that has been analyzed in detail by **Masamichi Kono**, deputy secretary-general of OECD, and that involves green bonds, environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors and socially responsible investing (SRI).



Konstsantinos Aravossis, general secretary, natural environment and water of the Ministry of Environment and Energy of Greece. Credits: Stavros Giannoulis Photography Videography

While creating a vivid discussion on economic, social and political aspects related to sustainability challenges, the event did not overlook the biological side of the problem, thanks to the contributions of representatives of **Goulandris Natural History Museum** and of other relevant actors: the role of biodiversity to reduce vulnerability to drought and natural disasters and the need for new natural resources management practices to adapt to climate change were the two focal points in the analysis offered by **Vassiliki Tsiaousi**, head of the “Biodiversity and Protected Areas” sector, EKBY, and member of the Climate Change Impact Study Committee (CCISC) of the Bank of Greece. More in general, the discussion highlighted the importance of research focused on the effects that climate change has on biodiversity, and the impact of information and education based on this knowledge. On this topic, **Maria Papaioannou**, managing director of Goulandris Museum, underlined the importance of preparing younger generations to familiarize with key notions as ecological footprint, climate change and circular economy. The Museum’s activities and the new GAIA Center for Environmental Research and Education are aimed at facilitating this process.



*Maria Papaioannou, managing director of Goulandris Natural History Museum, during her speech. Credits: Stavros Giannoulis Photography Videography*

An analysis of **How sustainable development is changing business leadership** showed different views on business evolution towards sustainability: according to **Pavlos Vlachos**, associate professor of marketing at the Alba Graduate Business School, The American College of Greece, it is time to embrace *humble leadership*, a responsible, long-term-oriented model which achieves profitability while serving sustainable development, as demonstrated by his research. The speakers referred also to the need for a more holistic approach to sustainability, to incorporate equality, diversity and social justice in business management, and to move from “business as usual” towards substantial changes of paradigm.

As pointed out in the discussion on **Technology and innovation**, the whole business sphere has been



*Ioannis Plakiotakis, minister of Maritime and Island Policy of Greece giving his speech on Green-blue shipping and sustainable marine resources management. Credits: Stavros Giannoulis Photography Videography*

affected by the introduction of artificial intelligence and technologic innovations, with important and worrying effects on employment. For this reason, the chief of the macroeconomic unit of the International Labour Organization **Ekkehard Ernst** stressed the need to focus on present and imminent challenges such as unemployment, wealth polarization, discrimination. Given the nature of economic activities in south-eastern Europe and the Mediterranean, **Green-blue shipping and sustainable marine resources management** represent core aspects of sustainability transition.

**Ioannis Plakiotakis**, minister of Maritime and Island Policy of Greece, described the current international efforts in this regard and the importance of Greek commitment, considering that the Greek fleet accounts for 21% of the global merchant fleet and 53% of the European Union fleet. Similarly, **Panos Laskaridis**, president of the Association of European Shipowners, stressed the importance of the shipping sector in global trade and the accountable nature of shipping industry, which is setting environmental standards on its own to meet the needs of the society.



As for **Sustainable tourism, agriculture and climate change**, the discussion focused on the need for new systems of water management and irrigation, as pointed out by **Kostas Skrekas**, deputy minister of Rural Development and Food of Greece, and on the urgency of a new model of ethical, sustainable tourism, based on the support of local communities and on the preservation of the territory.

*Kostas Skrekas, deputy minister of Rural Development and Food of Greece. Credits: Stavros Giannoulis Photography Videography*

During the two-day Summit, the Four Seas Initiative was presented as part of the panel on **Leadership and Sustainability**: in our time, partnerships have become the new leadership, and this initiative, combining sustainability efforts in the Mediterranean, in the Black Sea, in the Caspian Sea and in the Aral Sea can be considered the best example of this approach. The launch of the initiative and further reflections on the topic were offered by [Professor Phoebe Koundouri](#), Athens University of Economics and Business, co-chair UN SDSN Greece, President Elect of the European Association of Environmental and Resource Economists, Director of EIT Climate KIC Greece, [Professor Nicolaos Theodossiou](#), Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, chair [UN SDSN Black Sea](#), [Professor Yannis Ioannidis](#), National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, General Director of ATHENA Research Centre, **Mr. Mladen Ivanić**, former member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, former prime Minister Republika Srpska and **Mrs. Kateryna Yushchenko**, former First Lady of Ukraine, [Professor Angelo Riccaboni](#), University of Siena, chair of [PRIMA Foundation](#), took part to the panel. Professor Riccaboni presented also [The Sustainable Development Report 2019 – Mediterranean Countries Edition](#), showing that the region is lagging behind especially in terms of biodiversity protection, food policies, gender equality and infrastructures. Given the situation, incremental change is not sufficient, and deep transformation is the only viable option to sustainability.



*Sustainability Leadership and the UN SDSN Four Seas Initiative: Prof. Phoebe Koundouri, Mr. Mladen Ivanić, former member, Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, former prime Minister Republika Srpska, Mrs. Kateryna Yushchenko, former First Lady of Ukraine, Prof. Nicolaos Theodossiou, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, chair UN SDSN Black Sea, Prof. Angelo Riccaboni, University of Siena, chair, PRIMA Foundation, Prof. Yannis Ioannidis, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, General Director, Athena Research Centre*



The Summit was also a platform for discussion of further steps for the UN SDSN, with a particular attention to regional level: in this occasion, [Professor Jeffrey Sachs](#), [Professor Phoebe Koundouri](#), [Professor Nikolaos Theodossiou](#) and [Professor Stefanos Xenarios](#), Nazarbayev University, discussed the possibility of launching a new regional UN SDSN in central Asia.

*Prof. Stefanos Xenarios, Nazarbayev University, Prof. Jeffrey Sachs, director, SDSN Global, Prof. Nikolaos Theodossiou, chair, SDSN Black Sea, Prof. Phoebe Koundouri, co-chair, SDSN Greece.*

At the same time, the event created an opportunity for fertile discussion between national and international scholars promoting sustainability and key figures in Greek political decision-making: the crucial meeting with the first lady of Greece **Mrs. Mareva Mitsotaki** saw as attendants [Professor Jeffrey Sachs](#), [Professor Phoebe Koundouri](#), [Professor Andreas Papandreou](#), [Professor Yannis Ioannidis](#), National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, General Director of ATHENA Research Centre, **Mrs. Marianthi Papandreou**, [Dr. Sonia Sachs](#), Director, Health Sector, Centre for Sustainable Development, and [Professor Nicolaos Theodossiou](#), Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, chair of [UN SDSN Black Sea](#).



*Meeting with Mareva Mitsotaki, first lady of Greece. In the picture: Mrs. Marianthi Papandreou, Prof. Andreas Papandreou, Mrs. Mareva Mitsotaki, Prof. Jeffrey Sachs, Prof. Phoebe Koundouri, Prof. Nikolaos Theodossiou, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, chair UN SDSN Black Sea, Dr. Sonia Sachs, Director, Health Sector, Centre for Sustainable Development, Prof. Yannis Ioannidis, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, General Director, Athena Research Centre.*

Throughout the conference, the role of education to sustainable development was highlighted as a key factor to tackle contemporary challenges, and [Professor Jeffrey Sachs](#), [Professor Phoebe Koundouri](#), [Professor Andreas Papandreu](#) and [Dr. Sonia Sachs](#) discussed the issue with **Sofia Zaharaki**, Deputy Ministry of Education of Greece.

New strategies of national development based on sustainability were discussed also with **Christos Dimas**, Deputy Ministry of Development of Greece.

[Professor Jeffrey Sachs](#), [Professor Phoebe Koundouri](#), and [Dr. Sonia Sachs](#) met also **Professor Christos Zerefos**, head of the Research Centre for Atmospheric Physics and Climatology at the Academy of Athens.

[Professor Jeffrey Sachs](#), [Professor Phoebe Koundouri](#), **Antonis Alevizos**, **Katerina Lambrinou** and [Dr. Sonia Sachs](#) had also a meeting with the [Stavros Niarchos Foundation](#), a leading private philanthropic organization committed to the creation of positive impact for the society at large, through the promotion and financial support of initiatives related to arts and culture, education, health, sports, and social welfare.



*Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Professor Christos Zerefos, head, Research Centre for Atmospheric Physics and Climatology, Academy of Athens, and Professor Phoebe Koundouri at the Academy of Athens.*

The conference closed with the launch of the Euro-Asian UN SDSN initiative **"Sustainable Development in the Four Seas Initiative: the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea"**.

*The team of UN SDSN Greece at the launch of the Euro-Asian UN SDSN initiative "Sustainable Development in the Four Seas Initiative: the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea"*



On behalf [UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network Greece](#) and [EIT Climate-KIC Hub Greece](#) we are deeply grateful to all the speakers for contributing to the Sustainability Summit, making it the focal meeting on sustainability leadership in academia, politics, business and civil society in South East Europe and the Mediterranean. Namely, we would like to thank:



**John Andrews**

Consultant editor, The Economist



**Konstantinos Aravossis**

General secretary for natural environment and water, Ministry for Environment and Energy, Greece



**Dimitris Avramopoulos**

Commissioner for migration, home affairs and citizenship, European Commission



**Assia Bensalah Alaoui**

Ambassador at Large of His Majesty Mohamed VI Kingdom of Morocco



**Nicholas Christakis**

Sterling professor of social & natural science, Yale University



**Katerina Christofilidou**

Journalist, SKAI TV



**Maria Damanaki**

Global managing director for the ocean, The Nature Conservancy, Former commissioner, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, European Commission



**Mari Daskalantonaki**

Ceo Grecotel



**Ekkehard Ernst**

Chief of the macroeconomic unit, International Labour Organization



**Socrates Famellos**

Former alternate minister of environment and energy, Greece



**Angela Gerekou**

President, Greek National Tourism Organization



**Lilia Giugni**

Co-founder & CEO, GenPol (Gender & Policy Insights), research associate, Cambridge Centre for Social Innovation



**Kostas Hatzidakis**

Minister of environment and energy, Greece



**José Herrera**

Minister for the environment, sustainable development and climate change, Malta



**Sissy Iliopoulou**

Public affairs, communications & sustainability manager, Greece, Cyprus & Malta, Coca-Cola Company



**Yannis Ioannidis**

President and general director, "Athena" Research and Innovation Center, professor, department of informatics and telecommunications, National & Kapodistrian University of Athens



**Mladen Ivanić**

Former member, Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, former prime minister, Republika Srpska



**Christian Kälin**

Founder & chairman, Andan Foundation



**Masamichi Kono**  
Deputy secretary-general, OECD



**Hariton Korizis**  
Co-founder & chief product architect, ResonanceX



**Jadranka Kosor**  
Former prime minister, Croatia



**Nikolaos Koudounis**  
President, Federation of Sterea Ellada Industries



**George Koumoutsakos**  
Alternate minister for immigration policy, Ministry of Citizens' Protection, Greece



**Phoebe Koundouri**  
Professor, Athens University of Economics and Business, President, Elect European Association of Environmental and Resource Economists (EAERE), Director, EIT Climate KIC Hub Greece, Co-chair, UN SDSN Greece



**Spyros Kouvelis**  
President, Greek Eurasian Business Council, former vice-minister for foreign economic, cultural and environmental affairs, Greece



**Panagiotis Ladakakos**  
President, Hellenic Wind Energy Association (HWEA)



**Zlatko Lagumdžija**  
Former prime minister, Bosnia and Herzegovina



**Panos Laskaridis**

President, European  
Community Shipowners  
Associations



**Marnie McGregor**

Pioneer, urban affairs  
advisor, Climate KIC,  
Greece



**Alexandra Mitsotaki**

President, Action  
Finance Initiative-AFI,  
co-founder, World  
Human Forum



**Henry Moatsos**

CEO, AXA Insurance



**Theofanis Mylonas**

Chief executive officer,  
Eurobank Asset  
Management



**Jan Noterdaeme**

Co-founder, CSR Europe



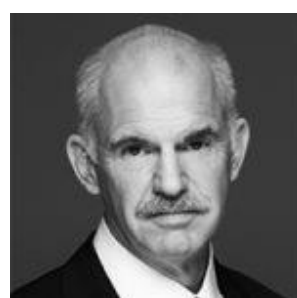
**Penelope Pagoni**

Senior manager, group  
health, safety, environment  
& sustainable development,  
Hellenic Petroleum



**Maria Papaioannou**

Director, Goulandris  
Natural History Museum



**George Papandreou**

President, Socialist  
International, former  
prime minister of Greece,  
member, Global SDSN  
Leadership Council



**Andreas Papandreou**

Co-chair, Sustainable Development Solutions Network Greece (SDSN Greece)



**Dimitris Papastergiou**

Mayor, Municipality of Trikala



**George Pechlivanoglou**

Executive director, Eunice WIND, chairman of wind energy committee, ASME



**Ioannis Plakiotakis**

Minister of maritime and island policy, Greece



**Athanasios Polychronopoulos**

Executive chairman, Polyeco Group



**Pavlina Proteou**

President & CEO, Beyond CSR



**Angelo Riccaboni**

Chair, PRIMA Foundation, professor, University of Siena



**Gregor Robertson**

Former mayor, City of Vancouver



**Jeffrey Sachs**

Director, Global SDSN Leadership Council, director, Centre for Sustainable Development, Columbia University



**Eva Siabanopoulou**  
CEO, Recycle Greece  
Tserkezidis



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



**Yannis Stournaras**  
Governor, Bank of  
Greece



**Nicolaos Theodossiou**  
Chair, SDSN Black Sea



**Harry Theoharis**  
Minister of tourism, Greece



**Dimitris Tryfonopoulos**  
Former secretary-general,  
Greek National Tourism  
Organisation, CEO,  
Desiterra Resort Santorini



**Antonis Tsbopoulos**  
Professor, NKUA, head  
of the bio-analytical  
laboratory, Goulandris  
Natural History  
Museum



**Vassiliki Tsiaousi**  
Head of the "Biodiversity and  
Protected Areas" sector,  
EKBY, member of the climate  
change impact study  
committee (CCISC), Bank of  
Greece



**Marianna Vardinogiannis**  
Goodwill ambassador,  
UNESCO



**Pavlos Vlachos**

Associate professor of marketing, Alba Graduate Business School, The American College of Greece



**Fali Voyatzaki**

President, Goulandris Natural History Museum



**Kateryna Yushchenko**

Former first lady, Ukraine



**Christos Zerefos**

Head, Research Center for Atmospheric Physics and Climatology, Academy of Athens



**Konstantinos Zervas**

Mayor, Municipality of Thessaloniki



**Vivian Zerzibili**

Corporate communications officer, Aktina Travel Group

Following the Third Sustainability Summit, Professor Phoebe Koundouri gave an interview on the axes and investments in tackling climate change at the World Energy News. Focusing on the work of the UN SDSN and EIT Climate-KIC in Greece, she underlined the need for a “transformational change” in Greece and specifically for investments in Blue Economy and Green Energy. Also, she briefed the main outcomes of the Third Sustainability Summit, highly supported by Professor Jeff Sachs, i.e. the 4-Seas Sustainable Blue Growth and the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Shipping Initiatives. Greece and Professor Koundouri team are at the forefront of both of these initiatives that have been put under the auspices of the United Nations. Find more [here](#).