

## The Athens Statement on the Greek Landscapes

The experts, who participated in the national workshop 'In Search of the Greek Landscapes' at the Greek Agricultural University, on 21-22 May 2009, have agreed on the following positions concerning the protection, management and conservation of the landscapes of Greece.

### *Basic positions*

1. Landscapes constitute ecological, geographic and morphological entities with multiple values –aesthetic, symbolic, sentient, etc.– and vital functions –natural, productive, social, cultural, etc.– that determine their dynamics.
2. Landscapes are being shaped and formed by the diachronic interaction between natural processes and human interventions.
3. Landscapes constitute elements of the daily activities of human beings and are related to their quality of life.
4. Landscapes are part of our common heritage and as such they contribute to the wellbeing of individuals and societies.
5. Greece encompasses a large diversity of landscapes as a result of its geographical position, its geomorphology, its climate, its fauna and flora, its history and the habitation patterns since ancient times.
6. The diverse landscapes –some of which are unique at a global scale– constitute part of the country's wealth with significant natural, social and cultural values, but also a key factor in promoting the country's natural and anthropogenic advantages.
7. Nowadays, Greek landscapes are critically threatened by deterioration and/or destruction due to senseless human interventions, resulting from excessive exploitation of natural resources, inadequate spatial land use planning and control, and more generally of ignorance and greed.

### *Actions required*

8. The Greek Parliament is invited to proceed rapidly with the approval of the Draft Law submitted, in March 2009, by the Greek Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works on the ratification of the European Landscape Convention of the Council of Europe, so that the Convention constitutes an integral part of the Greek legislative framework.
9. The Greek Ministry of Environment –as the responsible public body– as well as the public administration in general are urged to proceed with the planning of the necessary measures, regulations and structures for the effective implementation of the European Landscape Convention's articles and guidelines, in accordance also with the provisions of national, European and international legislation –and especially those of the UNESCO's World Heritage Convention. As such, a primary objective should be the effective codification of all relevant legislation. At the same time, the horizontal incor-

poration of landscapes in all sectoral policies (regional and city planning, environmental, cultural, social and developmental) should be an equally important objective.

10. With regard to physical planning, landscape issues should be taken into account during all relevant processes, especially in spatial and regulatory planning. Respectively, landscape issues should be incorporated in environmental planning.
11. To achieve these objectives, landscape considerations should be included specifically in Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment studies, through modification of the corresponding legal framework if required.
12. All relevant public, private and social institutions are also encouraged to contribute actively by launching actions that would lead to the recognition, the understanding, the definition, the assessment, the designation and the management of Greek landscapes.
13. Moreover, the previously noted institutions are encouraged to communicate the outcomes of their actions, to promote the exchange of knowledge and experience and to actively participate in national and international fora, in order to improve approaches and methods necessary for the efficient enhancement, conservation and management of landscapes.
14. Higher education institutions and research centres are called to strengthen their research on Greek landscapes, so that corresponding knowledge can be broadened and enriched, research results fully documented, and the scope and effectiveness of any intervention assessed. Research results should be disseminated to all educational institutions and levels.
15. The Greek State is invited to create the necessary preconditions for greater public participation so that more people can be actively involved in the all phases of planning and implementation of contemporary landscape policies.
16. All civil-society organisations (in particular environmental ones) are invited to include landscape conservation among their activities, strengthening in particular public awareness.
17. Finally, those (individuals, public and private entities) who have already realised the values of Greek landscapes are encouraged to join efforts on common goals, achieving critical mass and synergy.

*Athens, 22 May 2009*