

## **“National Round Table Discussion for Fire Management in Greece in times of economic crisis”**

### **Cpt. Tsakon’ Welcome Note**

Dearests,

It is with great pleasure that I am participating in the first National “Round Table Round Table Discussion for Fire Management in Greece in times of economic crisis” which is under the aegis of the Secretariat General for Civil Protection and the Special Secretariat for Forests of the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change.

Sincere congratulations are due to the Global Fire Monitoring Center and its General Director Dr. Johann Goldammer as well as all those who contributed to organizing this significant initiative to have all the respective civil authorities come together, discuss common problems, find effective solutions and support the National Policy on Forest Fire Management.

As far as our Foundation “Maria Tsakos-International Center of Maritime Research and Tradition” is concerned, it comes with great satisfaction and conscious responsibility the fact that this meeting is a follow-up of the Congress “Our response to the fires-Working together for a better Chios” which was organized last October in Chios, just two months after the devastating fires that stroke the island, with the participation of excellent personalities and experts on these issues.

the fires of August 2012 were of the biggest disasters that this country has faced, a unique tragedy. Our congress had a double scope: the examination and the draft of specific proposals for the relief and the healing of the wounds of Chios, and, on the other hand, to contribute to the improvement of the mechanisms necessary for the prevention, the reaction and the recession of similar calamities in the future. the conclusions and the lessons we learned do not concern only Chios. They stress the significance of the sensitivity, the knowledge, the expertise, the completion and the harmonic collaboration between the citizen and the State aiming at the triple dimension of the Prevention-Action during the fire, as well as Post-fire Management.

Expert advice (some of whom are here with us today), come to the conclusion that in the next decades our country and mostly the eastern part of Greece, will face dangers of extreme situations because of climate factors, not only in the concurrence of forest fires, but also in respect to the final damage. The consequences coming from the forest’s destruction, this social element, the source of life, security and prosperity concern us ALL!

My wife Dr. Irene Tsakos often stresses out to me that in the protection of nature holds the same as in the protection of health, and Hippocrates was the first to stress it: “To secure is to prevent, to prevent is better than to heal”. This does not apply only to health, but also to our environment. Dear guests, your presence here today is a positive sign that we move towards the right direction. I would like to wish you good luck and I look forward to the conclusions of your works. Our foundation, having as a milestone the protection of our environment, will continue to contribute to and support all efforts made. We, Mariners, through decades, have implemented with persistence a compact international legal framework for the protection and continuous maintenance of the marine environment.

It is with satisfaction and gratification that we welcome the issuance of such an important Manual as the one that is being prepared by Dr. Goldammer's team and which includes circumstantial practical guidelines and directions for the local authorities as well as for the volunteering groups and the citizens. A valuable contribution in which there are included lessons and experiences, from the unfortunate Chios fires.

I will wrap-up this short speech by extending our Foundations's Chairman Mr. Efthymios Mitropoulos whole-hearted wishes for the successful consummation of this initiative and denote the distinct advice of the Chairman of our Foundation's Scientific Council, Dr. Stamatis Krimigis, who urges us to devote ourselves to the protection of our environment, our Earth, this rare planet given the fact that inhabitation, "the evasion towards other extra-terrestrial destinations, wether close of afar, does not pose a visible solution for at least the forthcoming millenniums".

We applaud efforts like yours today which are catalytic and significant for the future of mankind.

I congratulate all those involved in the organization of today's Round Table Discussion.

Thank you.