

Joint Statement

We, Prime Ministers George Papandreou, Sali Berisha and Nikola Gruevski of the three States sharing the Prespa Lakes Basin, met today, November twenty seventh of the year 2009, at Pili, Municipality of Prespa in Greece,

Taking into account the Declaration of the Prime Ministers of our three States of 2 February 2000 on the Creation of the Prespa Park and the Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Lakes and their Surroundings;

Considering that the Prespa Lakes and their surrounding catchment basin are a unique natural area whose geomorphological, ecological, biodiversity and cultural significance is of international importance while constituting a fragile and vulnerable ecosystem that is threatened *inter alia* by various human activities which effects are further aggravated by the impacts of climate change;

Recognising their common responsibility for the conservation of the Prespa ecosystem, its services and functions, as a basis for the sustainable development of the area, including its environmental conservation and viability, economic development and sustainable livelihoods of its inhabitants, constituting a catalyst for stability and prosperity of the area;

Aware that individual actions of countries are not sufficient to bring about conservation of the ecosystems of Prespa and its cultural heritage, and thus wishing to enhance our transboundary cooperation, at all levels of administration as well as through the effective cooperation of non-governmental organisation and of the civil society organisations; and

Taking into account the relevant provisions of international legal instruments in force in the field of environmental protection of which we are parties or signatories, the bilateral agreements in force between our three countries concerning co-operation in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development as well as the fact that only one of the three countries is a member state of the European Union;

We agree on the following:

1. We recognise the valuable experience gained from the trilateral cooperation in the framework of the Prespa Park since 2000, through the operation of the interim Coordination Committee and its Secretariat and we acknowledge the valid elements included in the Strategic Action Plan for the Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park elaborated in this framework, as a sound foundation for our further transboundary cooperation.

2. In order to ensure an integrated protection of the ecosystem and the overall sustainable development of the Prespa Lakes Basin, we look forward to the signing on 2 February 2010, tenth Anniversary of the creation of the Prespa Park and World Wetlands Day, of an Agreement between our three countries with the European Commission as a fourth Party, on the “Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Lakes Basin”, as an expression of our willingness to fully operationalise the Declaration of the Prime Ministers of 2 February 2000.

3. In this context, and based on territorial integrity, mutual benefit and good faith, we commit to further promote our bilateral and multilateral cooperation so as to:

- enhance integrated water resources management, with emphasis on both quality and quantity aspects of surface and ground waters encompassed in the Prespa Lakes Basin system, including the development of integrated transboundary river basin management

plans, according to existing international and European Union standards, frameworks and commitments,

- prevent, control and reduce pollution affecting the Prespa Lakes Area, based on best available techniques,
- protect soil resources from *inter alia* erosion and degradation,
- protect, conserve and promote the sustainable use of biodiversity in the basin through *inter alia* control of the adverse effects of human/economic activities on natural resources in the basin according to the principles of sustainable development.

4. To this end, we commit to further expedite our means of cooperation so as to develop joint plans, strategies and measures, aiming at an effective integration of the environmental considerations into other sectors and economic activities in the Prespa Lakes basin such as agriculture, tourism, spatial planning, fisheries, forestry, infrastructure development and energy, biodiversity conservation and protected areas management within the basin.

5. Moreover, we acknowledge cooperation on capacity building, exchange of experiences, information and know-how as an integral part of our common efforts, aiming *inter alia* at supporting the process of translating local needs into concrete and bankable projects, through peer-reviews and assessments, focusing at increased coherence, ownership, alignment and harmonisation of related actions.

6. Taking into account that climate change poses serious , threats to water resources and ecosystems, such as the Prespa Lakes, aggravating even further their vulnerable conditions and hampering achievement of the abovementioned objectives, in view of the fifteenth Conference of the Parties (COP-15) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to take place in Copenhagen in December 2009, we commit to joint efforts so as to contribute to a strong and fair Agreement in Copenhagen for combating climate change, compatible with sustainable economic growth and prosperity of livelihoods.

7. Along these lines, we emphasize the need to continue developing bridges between our countries so as to improve our knowledge-base and responses to common challenges through feasible, ambitious, firm, and concreted actions.

8. In this respect, we strongly support an Agreement in Copenhagen that will give due emphasis on adaptation aspects *inter alia* through the creation of a Framework of Action on Adaptation as an integral part of the Copenhagen outcomes that will allow building resilience and defence measures to increased climate variability and climate change, through the application of holistic approaches at catchment area, for the protection of vulnerable ecosystems and their functions and services, such as the Prespa Lakes, until and beyond 2012.

9. We will spare no efforts so that the Prespa Park becomes and remains a model of its kind as well as an additional reference to the peaceful collaboration among our countries.

Pili Prespa, 27 November, 2009