

Milos Island, Greece

30 June – 3 July

SDIMI 2013

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Greek Mining Enterprises Association, I welcome you to the beautiful island of Milos, which the nature is endowed with special natural beauty and a significant wealth of mineral resources. Milos is a bright example of balanced development of the economy where tourism and mining activities coexist harmoniously and develop for the benefit of the residents and for the benefit of all the stakeholders, the local and the national economy.

I would like to wish success for the sixth International Conference “Sustainable Development in the Mineral Industry- SDIMI 2013” and at your free time, I strongly advice you, to explore the beauties of this island and enjoy its magnificent nature and environment.

I was asked to say a few words about the latest developments in the field of mineral raw materials in our country, which, as you well know, the recent years, has been plagued by a great financial crisis.

Greece is one of the EU Member States that has significant mineral resources in terms of quality, quantity and variety of ores and minerals with a great industrial interest and a wide range of applications. This is a fact, which, if coupled with the needs of the European and international community for MRM, offers comparative advantages to our national economy.

The Greek extractive industry is an important sector of our country’s economic activity (together with the corresponding manufacturing sector it accounts for 3-5% of the GDP) providing raw materials to a number of other equally important sectors such as power generation, cement industry,

building/construction industry, non-ferrous metals (aluminium, nickel etc.), stainless steel industry etc.

Despite the fact that 2012, had been the peak year for the financial crisis in Greece , the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, that deals with Mineral Resources, in cooperation with the society and the enterprises of the extractive industry sector , represented by the Greek Mining Enterprises Association, the Technical Chamber of Greece, The Geotechnical Chamber and the Institute of Geology-Mineral Exploration and Survey, formed the National Minerals Policy of the country which was announced by the Ministry, on 29 of February 2012.

Greece was the fourth member of the European Union which adopted a National Minerals Policy for raw materials .This policy complied with the European Initiative for Raw Materials and the European Strategy for a Resource Efficient Europe.

The national mining policy on mineral raw materials needs to take into account not only the key points of the European initiative for raw materials (R.M.I.) but also the foregoing analysis on the importance of the various mineral resources with particular emphasis on materials affecting directly the Greek economy and regional development. By doing so, the national policy on mineral resources will be able to lead to the adequate planning for the exploitation of the country's mineral resources in accordance with the standards of European and other countries with significant mineral resources. The long-term objective of the national policy on the exploitation of the country's mineral resources is to secure the smooth operation and further development of a domestic extractive sector in order for it to be sound and dynamic, able to meet the domestic needs for raw materials, be competitive at an international level and able to develop important exports, support the national and regional development, exploit rationally the available natural resources, reduce its environmental footprint and ensure the social acceptance of its work.

As established from the above, the Greek extractive sector has always had a particularly dynamic presence thanks to the adequate quantities of proven and potential mineral reserves, the infrastructure and the significant existing extraction works, the remarkable experience according to the European standards, the know-how of the extraction process and exploitation methods, the existing specialized personnel and the technologically advanced equipment used in the operational works. The exploitation of our mineral

resources is a national choice within the framework of the principles of sustainable development and the new European policy on the MRM, as broadly defined above.

The need for a more balanced approach and the setting of economic, environmental and social parameters for securing sustainable development seems to be imperative.

The extractive activity is per se inextricably related to the concept of sustainable development as it deals with non renewable resources while having to secure the on-going supply of the necessary materials to the society by guaranteeing the adequate reserves required for meeting the current and future needs and making efforts to minimize its environmental footprint.

A national policy for the exploitation of the mineral resources must be compatible with the strategy for sustainable development that was adopted by the EU. This policy must focus on the more effective exploitation of the mineral resources, the improvement of the environmental performance, the safe operation of the mines and the accidents prevention, the mining waste management and the recycling process. A main factor for the efficient implementation of this policy is the acceptance of the extractive activity by the local societies as a balanced growth factor.

More precisely, the main axes of an integrated policy for the MRM within the framework of sustainable development are:

- Improvement and dissemination of geological knowledge.
- Access to the deposits through an adequate land-use planning policy.
- Establishment of a modern legal framework providing for clear licensing processes to be implemented within a reasonable time frame and including commitments about the protection of the environment.
- Set up effective mechanisms supervising the application of the environmental terms throughout the exploitation period and ‘after closure care’.
- Rational management of the existing reserves and research & technology development for more efficient extraction and processing processes.
- Exploration for new MRM deposits.
- Use of alternative materials to substitute the existing ones, development of new uses for the existing products and recycling.
- Ensuring good health and safety conditions at the extraction sites.

- Rational waste management (production prevention, safe storage or disposal, beneficial use etc.).
- Environment protection, restoration and care after the completion of the extractive works ('closure plan').
- Monitoring and control of the law enforcement.

The harmonization of the extractive activity with the principles of sustainable development led the enterprises members of the Greek Mining Enterprises Association to the adoption of a Code of Ten (10) Principles of Sustainable Development, which provides for the constant improvement of their performance in all economic, environmental and social fields and the establishment of the publication of the final results based on yearly measurable indicators in the Annual Report of the Association.

So today we are at the phase of implementing the National Minerals Policy. This requires hard work and especially political will, because, if there is no political will, the National Mineral Policy will remain on paper.

After the recent Governmental reshuffle which was occurred few days ago, Dr.I.Maniatis, placed, as minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, responsible also for the mineral wealth. This encourages us to hope that there will be the political will to implement the "National Minerals Policy". This stems from the fact that Dr. Maniatis in 2012 was the responsible vice minister for the formation and announcement of our Minerals Policy.

As far as the implementation of the National Minerals Policy is concerned, a positive evolution for our activities is the new law for the environmental licensing. In order for this law to be in full function, a number of ministerial decisions are required which, unfortunately, are delayed.

In addition to that, we recently issued the new Regulation of Mining and Quarry Activities, which is modernizing all the regulations concerning Health & Safety at work, as well as the production procedures and the functions of mining sites.

The Regional Land use Planning is also in progress and it will encounter spatially the development of mineral raw materials.

Finally, I would like to emphasize the importance for our sector of the new mining investments in Chalkidiki and Thrace for the exploitation of mixed sulfure metallic compounds and porphyrite, ores and the metallurgical processes for polymetallic production of led, zinc, cupper, silver and gold. . Despite the obstacles, I strongly believe that all the three gold mine investments will be implemented and will contribute in the sustainable development of the country

Development is the main issue, nowadays, in Greece where the unemployment rate is 23%. According to the usual phrase of the environmentalists, the most “endangered specie” in Greece, is the Greek citizen. This was a similar answer of a high school student of the island of Nisyros, when he asked from his tutor, in a biodiversity seminar “What is the specie of the island that needs protection, giving the answer the “Nisyros inhabitant”.

Eleftherios Faidros,
Chairman