

## Statement by Mr. Sortirios Hatzigakis, Minister of Justice, Hellenic Republic of Greece

*Rome, 21 November 2007*

*Mr. Prime Minister, Dear Colleagues,*

I would like to congratulate the Italian government, my Italian colleague, Mr. Clemente Mastella, as well as the OECD Secretariat on their initiative to organize this High Level Conference.

Fighting against corruption is an imperative need in order to secure transparency and to ensure the impartial function of the democratic institutions.

We all acknowledge the fact that every illegal action undermines the quality of democracy. It also attempts to spread darkness in areas where the basic principles of democracy aim at the absolute transparency.

Please allow me to mention an example that expresses the contrast between legitimacy and illegality through a figure from ancient Greek heritage. Phaethon, who is Apollo the Ancient Greek God, with his carriage runs through, reveals and sheds light to anything and to anyone who tries to escape from the truth.

Anything legal can be verified under the light.

This ancient example should give us direction for the safeguarding of the democratic principles. It should also guide us regarding human rights, the rule of law and social justice. It is the only way that we can preserve intact the values of democracy.

These values are in grave danger in our days. Because we live in a world where the consequences of globalization could foster the expansion of corruption and bribery.

As far as my country is concerned, the institution of Justice has already completed its “self-catharsis” by sending a clear message to every direction. All incidents of corruption should be revealed because it is our duty to protect the public interest in every way.

Greece recognizes the value of the Convention against Bribery. Besides, we were among the first signatories of the Convention. This Convention was incorporated in our national legislation in 1998. In 2001, Greece ratified the Civil Law Convention on Corruption and recently the provisions of the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption of the Council of Europe were embodied in national legislation.

Our efforts are not just limited to the ratification of Conventions. We have provided our judges and our police with the necessary legislative tools for combating corruption and money laundering. We raised awareness about the Convention among our business community. We consider these actions to be absolutely necessary. Because it is our firm belief that Greece plays a significant role in the economy and to the societies of the Balkans and the South-East of Europe.

After ten years from the date of the signature, we reached an important crossroads. This is why the Working Group on Bribery examines an expansion in membership and at the same time reviews its instruments and procedures.

We welcome the effort to extend membership of the Group to parties from all parts of the world and especially of the emerging economies.

Furthermore, I would like to underline that Greece will support and will contribute to the cooperation among the OECD Convention and the UN Convention against Corruption.

Finally, I would like to convey to you that my country’s political will is an efficient and successful system so that we can fight and abolish corruption in all levels.