

To
Mr. Yannis Maniatis
Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Change
119 Mesogeion Street, 101 92 Athens
Fax. 210 6969701

Brussels, 9 January 2014
HOS 14/009

Dear Minister,

Your government is taking over the Presidency of the European Council amidst critical debates for the future of Europe's environment and climate policy. You have the last chance to conclude vital political agreements before the current European Commission and Parliament reach the end of the term. BirdLife Europe and its Greek Partner, the Hellenic Ornithological Society, would like to share with you our priorities for the policy agenda for the six upcoming months.

A first priority is of course moving forward with the development of the Climate and Energy package for 2030. Progress is urgently needed to avert catastrophic climate change and to ensure that the EU does not fall behind the global process so that its credibility as a progressive force in the international scene is not jeopardized. This piece of flagship legislation must bring in binding targets as soon as possible to guide investments towards a secure and affordable energy system. Only strong political leadership with an eye for the long-term perspective can deliver the low-cost, low-carbon energy supply that Europe needs. Strong leadership will also be necessary in brokering a deal on tackling the Indirect Land Use Change of Biofuels. The recent collapse of Council negotiations runs the risk of leaving Europe with a broken system of subsidies that harms the climate and biodiversity, disrupts food markets and does nothing to promote innovative clean energy solutions. We call on the Greek Presidency to provide this leadership.

A second priority is to advance on the European Commission's regulation proposal to address the damages caused by invasive alien species that is currently being discussed by the European Council. Europe's biodiversity and natural environment urgently need this important piece of legislation to be finalised and swiftly implemented before the European Elections cause delay. Invasive alien species are devastating Europe's natural environment and costing Member States at least 12 billion euros a year. The problem can be fixed through prevention, control and co-ordination, but strong management will be needed from the Greek Presidency.

Under your Presidency, three further dossiers should require a particular attention. The first one is the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive. In the Directive, robust environmental measures will be crucial to ensure that much needed infrastructure and energy investments are rolled out sustainably and with a long-term perspective in the marine environment. Secondly, there is likely to be an initiative on environmental inspections which will finally propose a solution to the poor implementation of European environmental legislation, as identified by the 7th Environmental Action Programme. We count on your government to swiftly make progress on this file. Finally, your Presidency will be key in preparing for the EU's position for the next Convention on Migratory Species later in the year; this is a critical body for ensuring protection for migratory birds and biodiversity.

BirdLife Europe and the Hellenic Ornithological Society will be offering all their expertise and support to assist you in the challenging work ahead.

Sincerely,



Angelo Caserta
Regional Director
BirdLife Europe



George Sgouros
Director
Hellenic Ornithological Society