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Greece aspires to prove its determination and its capacity to implement necessary structural reforms, to create opportunities for growth and to shape a new reliable program, which will contribute to the recovery of the Economy and to the transformation of the country to an investment-friendly hub in the region.

Prime Minister calls for collective effort, systematic work



In his New Year's message, Prime Minister, Lucas Papademos, called for a collective effort with systematic work and social solidarity, so that Greece will permanently avert an irregular, disastrous default in the critical first quarter of 2012, so as to remain in the euro and return to a growth orbit.

Mr. Papademos called on everyone to contribute to dealing with the uncertainty and social repercussions of the crisis, recalled the struggles and sacrifices of preceding generations, which did not abandon the effort for a better tomorrow, and set out as his priorities the streamlining of the state, building the Economy on firm foundations, and rendering the Greek Economy competitive once again.

On the global situation and the crisis in the Euro zone, Mr. Papademos said that "we are living in the worst post-war international and domestic crisis", adding, however, that "we can overcome the crisis", and warning that "magic solutions do not exist", and unity is needed in order to exit the crisis.



President of the Republic, Mr. Karolos Papoulias, in his New Year's Message, urged consensus among all the members of the government, all the political parties, the trade unionists, the intellectual and business world and the state functionaries, as well as those who form the public opinion, and personally guaranteed that Greece will exit from the crisis.

After the traditional ceremony at the Presidential Mansion where the political, military and judicial leaderships exchange wishes for the New Year, President of the Republic, Mr. Karolos Papoulias, voiced support for the transitional government of Prime Minister, Lucas Papademos, and appeared optimistic on the country's course, while noting the need for unanimity among the political parties backing the government.

President of the Republic, Mr. Karolos Papoulias, Athens, December 31st, 2011

"The front against Greece's exit from the Euro zone must be indissoluble, because it is our duty to avert a national disaster, with unbearable consequences, especially for the weak".

Prime Minister, Lucas Papademos, Athens, December 31st, 2011

"The next three months will be particularly critical. The decisions to be taken will determine Greece's course over the next decades. It is our duty to work systematically. With a plan, a collective effort, clear goals and persistence in their materialization, with the responsibility and cooperation of the political forces, we can turn 2012 into a year of hope".

Prime Minister, Lucas Papademos, Athens, December 31st, 2011

"The efforts that were made, the sacrifices of the Greek people and the solidarity of our partners resulted in Greece's averting economic disaster and in our taking substantial steps towards exiting the crisis".

Prime Minister, Lucas Papademos, Athens, December 31st, 2011

"We are a proud people. We will safeguard our place in Europe. The euro is our currency. The Europe of the developed countries is our common home".

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[German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, Berlin, January 9th, 2012](#)

"We must give Greece a chance but Greece must once more become competitive. We want Greece to remain in the Euro zone but we also want Athens to meet its commitments to the troika".

[Chancellor Merkel urges Greece to move faster on second bailout deal, PSI](#)

Greece must speed up negotiations for the second bailout package, including the PSI bond swap program, in order to receive the next tranche of EU bailout loans, German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, stressed, following a meeting with French President, Nicolas Sarkozy.

Replying to questions on whether the European Union had taken sufficient measures to avert a Greek default, Merkel stressed that the goal was that no member-state should be

excluded from the Euro zone, and added that Greece appeared to be on a "reasonable path".

She stressed, however, that all the measures agreed with the EU-IMF troika must be implemented and referred specifically to the PSI bond-swap program, saying that this was a condition for disbursing the next tranche of economic aid.

Both Merkel and Sarkozy appeared confident that an agreement for greater fiscal discipline in the EU

will be signed by March and agreed on the need to boost growth and employment, while adopting a common position concerning a tax on financial transactions.

[German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, Berlin, January 9th, 2012](#)

"The second Greek aid package, including the debt restructuring, must be in place quickly. Otherwise it won't be possible to pay out the next tranche for Greece".

[German Foreign Minister, Guido Westerwelle, in Athens](#)



Following his meetings with Greek leadership, in Athens, including talks with Prime Minister, Lucas Papademos, German Foreign Minister, Guido Westerwelle, expressed a message of solidarity to Greece, as well as encouragement to ongoing reforms.

The German FM also met with New Democracy leader, Antonis Samaras, and his counterpart, Stavros Dimas, with whom he held a joint press conference.

According to reports, Samaras and Westerwelle discussed in detail the course of implementation of Oct. 26-27 and Dec. 9 EU summit decisions.

On his part, Mr. Samaras repeated his position for a need to meet fiscal targets, as well as efforts to find a different "mix" for the Greek Economy, one that will lead to a jump-start in growth.

Beyond the economic crisis in Greece and the Euro zone, both men discussed regional and international developments, such as

Iran, EU-Turkey relations and developments in the Arab world.

During the meeting with the Greek Foreign Minister, Stavros Dimas, Westerwelle expressed his backing for the establishment of independent European ratings firm.

Mr. Dimas said that the Greek people have already made numerous sacrifices and are concerned over their future, while stressing the importance of Berlin's backing for Athens' exit from the crisis.



[Eurogroup President: Return to drachma not an option for Greece](#)

A return to the drachma is not an option for Greece, Eurogroup President, Jean-Claude Juncker, stated, stressing that the country's debt problem could be resolved

without Greece leaving the Euro zone, and adding that details of a second support package for Greece, agreed by European leaders, would be finalised over the next few

weeks after Athens completed its negotiations with private creditors over a 'haircut' in Greek state bonds.

Head of the European Commission Task Force for Greece: Greece competitive gap closing

The head of the European Commission Task Force for Greece, Horst Reichenbach, stated that a tight salaries policy and increased productivity will assist in closing the Greek Economy's competitiveness gap in comparison with the rest of the EU,

and estimated that, until the end of 2013, Greece may have covered the largest part of the difference, underlining that from 2010 the per capita cost of labour has reduced more rapidly than in the Euro zone.

He also recognised that the enduring recession in Greece has major repercussions to citizens' income, calling for the establishment of ambitious but realistic targets and timetables.

Cabinet approves draft bill for fast-track investments, lifting cabotage

The Greek cabinet approved a draft bill presented by the Development, Competitiveness and Shipping Ministry that lowers the minimum limits for including proposed investments in the 'Fast Track' process, as well as fully lifting cabotage on Greek seas.

The bill also included measures designed to speed up investments.

Development Minister, Mihalis Chrysohoidis, said that the limits for includ-

ing a project in the Fast-track process had been reduced from 250 million euro to 120 million euro, while investments in industry would henceforth only need a capital of about 15 million euro.

The bill also calls for a single reception centre for investments at 'Invest in Greece', where applications will be replied within 60 days.

Besides, the full deregulation of cabotage will completely liberalize the cruise

market and allow cruise ships to embark from Greek ports.

Addressing the cabinet meeting, where the Development and Competitiveness Ministry's bill was discussed, Prime Minister, Lucas Papademos, stressed that the government's main target is the promotion of structural changes which help the Economy's competitiveness and growth.

Danish Ambassador: Greece remaining in the euro is an EU priority



Outlining the priorities of the new Danish Presidency of the European Union, Danish Ambassador to Athens, Tom Noring, stressed that the entire EU placed priority

on keeping Greece in the euro.

The Danish Ambassador to Athens also referred to problems of illegal migration and human traffick-

ing, and admitted that Greece faced particularly high pressures from illegal migration and needed the support of its European partners in dealing with these.



Chinese Ambassador discusses cooperation prospects with local authorities on Crete

China's Ambassador to Athens, Du Qiwen, who arrived at the island of Crete on New Year's Eve accompanied by his wife, met with the mayor of the port city of Iraklion, Giannis Kourakis.

Their talks focused on cooperation issues, the promotion of locally produced farm products, as well as issues concerning tourism and culture.

The Chinese Ambassador

underlined his great love for Greece and pointed out that due to this fact he is referred to by members of his country's diplomatic corps as "the Greek".

During his visit, Du Qiwen also met the Crete Region Authority head, Stavros Arnaoutakis, and visited the grave of Greek writer, Nikos Kazantzakis, where he laid a wreath.

In a statement after his meeting with Mr. Arnaou-

takis, Mr. Du once again referred to the major operation set up on the island in February 2011 to evacuate Chinese nationals trapped in war-torn Libya and arrange for their return to China.

He also announced that a delegation of Chinese business people will be visiting Crete in the first two months of 2012 to investigate the potential for the export of island products to China.

Prime Minister Lucas Papademos discusses cooperation in energy sector with UAE official

Prime Minister, Lucas Papademos, and Deputy Environment, Energy and Climate Change Minister, Yiannis Maniatis, held a meeting with United Arab Emirates Special Envoy and Assistant Foreign Minister for energy and climate change issues, Dr. Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, who was in Athens to attend a Greek-Arab business forum with the participation of business people and political figures from both countries.

During the meeting, Dr. Al Jaber indicated that the UAE is interested in participating in the planned privatizations of Greek energy sector utilities, as well as the search for oil and natural gas on Greek territory.

The two sides also examined the prospects for cooperation in tourism and renewable energy sources, an area where UAE is making significant investments that include the Masdar City program that aims to be a prototype 'green' urban development.

Besides, efforts by Greece and the United Arab Emirates to forge a strategic partnership at the political and economic level were discussed by Deputy Prime Minister & Finance Minister, Evangelos Venizelos, and UAE Foreign Minister, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Talks reportedly focused on the UAE's participation in investment opportunities in the east Mediterranean country through an ongoing privatisation plan.

The meeting also touched on developments in the implementation of decisions taken during the Oct. 26-27 EU Summit.

Moreover, Greece and the United Arab Emirates signed a memorandum of understanding in the tourism sector, envisaging the promotion of mutual tourism packages through the exchange of information and advertising materials, partnerships between travel agencies from the two countries and, in par-

ticular, special forms of tourism, such as agrotourism, cultural tourism, cruises etc.

The memorandum also cites closer cooperation in tourism education and training.

Deputy Prime Minister & Finance Minister, Evangelos Venizelos, Athens, 11.1.2012

"For Greece, the United Arab Emirates is a point of reference in the Gulf Area. It is a country with which we maintain close and sincere ties of friendship as well as strategic cooperation".

Deputy Prime Minister & Finance Minister, Evangelos Venizelos, Athens, 11.1.2012

"For us, Greece's close ties with the Arab world make up a solid parameter of our foreign and developmental policy. And this is not just rhetoric. I believe that this is a very attractive field for bilateral economic and political cooperation for our two countries".

Petros Alivizatos, Deputy Tourism Minister, Athens, 11.1.2012

"We are in an era where development and investments are the cornerstone for the recovery of Greek Economy. Tourism is a main lever in this effort. We pledge to promote the necessary reforms, offering fundamental and permanent solution needed to create a new dynamism. Greece needs high-quality investments with long-term performance, with respect to the particularities of the country's natural wealth, as well as investments in a model that will extend the tourism season (beyond summer)".

Israeli Defence Minister on visit to Greece



Greek-Israeli relations in their entirety and developments in the wider region as well as the economic crisis in Greece and Europe were examined during the meeting of Foreign Minister, Stavros Dimas, with Israeli Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister, Ehud Barak, in the framework of the Israeli official's visit to Greece.

The possibilities of further cooperation between the two countries in the energy sector and the transfer of energy to Europe were also discussed, while the agenda included Syria, Iran and the Arab Spring.

Ehud Barak expressed his appreciation for Greece's contribution to the extinguishing of the fires that took place in Israel last year.

Besides, Greek Defence

Minister, Dimitris Avramopoulos, met with visiting Israeli Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister, Ehud Barak, and discussed bilat-



eral cooperation in the defence sector.

The talks between the two men were held in a "good climate", and the political framework was set out for cooperation between Greece and Israel in the defence sector, while afterwards working groups of the two countries met to itemize the areas of cooperation.

Mr. Avramopoulos described Barak's visit to Athens as "important", as

it is encompassed in the climate of understanding and friendship between the two countries and also extends to the sector of defence, and stressed that the cooperation between Greece and Israel is "pro-peace and frank, and is not aimed against anyone", and could create new sources of wealth for the peoples of the two countries but also the peoples of the region.

Mr. Barak, in turn, stressed that Israel looks forward to closer relations with Greece, thanked Greece for its assistance in last year's devastating wildfires in Israel, and said that the two countries have a common interest in the resolution of the differences in the region, to the benefit of peace and of stability in the Middle East and the southeastern Mediterranean.

Foreign Minister holds meeting with Greek negotiator for FYROM name dispute

Foreign Minister, Stavros Dimas, had a meeting on the name dispute between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (fYROM) with Greece's negotiator, Ambassador Adamantios Vasilakis, in view of his upcoming meetings with UN special envoy, Matthew Nimetz, in New York.

Concerning Athens' expectations from the meetings with Nimetz, Foreign Ministry spokesman, Grigoris Delavekouras, said that the government considered the fact that the meeting was taking place a positive

development, since it would activate the process at the United Nations and help it acquire momentum, and expressed hope that there will be progress in the negotiations.

Responding to questions concerning Skopje's lately dismissive attitudes toward the UN talks, Mr. Delavekouras noted a constant escalation of a negative stance from fYROM's leadership and pointed out that the entire international community had repeatedly urged the two sides to hold negotiations for a solution to the name

issue in good faith, in accordance with the provisions of UN Security Council resolutions.

"This is the steadfast will and desire of the Greek side, which is participating constructively in the negotiations with a view to arriving at a solution to the name issue as soon as possible. Unfortunately, we are seeing a stance that is anything but constructive for the progress of the process from the side of the neighboring country", he underlined.

The Chinese Media on Greece

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Foreign Ministry and Environment Ministry discuss national policy on energy

In a meeting held at the foreign ministry and attended by Foreign Minister, Stavros Dimas, and Environment Minister, George Papaconstantinou, Foreign Ministry and Environment, Energy and Climate Change Ministry staff held talks on formulating a coordinated and integrated national policy on energy issues, and agreed to create a joint working group to tackle the issues involved.

Mr. Dimas noted that the

meeting aimed at a coordinated energy policy able to deal with the problems, difficulties, challenges and opportunities that arose in constantly changing conditions on a global level.

They discussed projects for transferring energy from Russia and the Caspian Sea to Europe via Greece, exploration and exploitation of Greece's hydrocarbon reserves and the problems created by the situation in Iran.

Among the potential problems that may have to be faced is a drive by certain EU member-states, led by France, for sanctions against Tehran. If these include exports of Iranian oil, this is expected to create a major problem for Greece.