

The Hague, 10 July 2014

**Mr José Manuel Barroso**  
President  
European Commission  
B - 1049 Brussels

***Ref: Serious threats to the coastal landscapes in Greece by a proposed law currently under discussion by the Hellenic Parliament***

Dear President Barroso,

On behalf of Europa Nostra, the pan-European federation of NGOs committed to the safeguard of Europe's cultural and natural heritage, we wish to draw your personal attention to the draft law recently submitted to the Hellenic Parliament, under the title: "Boundary marking, management and protection of the coastline and shores". Europa Nostra and our Greek member organisations, led by Elliniki Etairia, our country representation in Greece, wish to convey to you and - through you - to the entire team of the European Commission, our grave concern about some provisions of the proposed law which, if adopted and implemented, will put the invaluable coastline environment and heritage in Greece under serious threat.

As you know, Europa Nostra supports every effort to achieve "smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" in Europe. We however emphasize that economic development can be neither healthy nor sustainable in the absence of due safeguard and enhancement of our environment and our cultural heritage. For this reason, Europa Nostra welcomes and fully endorses the historic conclusions adopted on 20 May under the Hellenic Presidency of the EU, by the EU Council of Ministers on "cultural heritage as a strategic resource of a sustainable Europe"<sup>1</sup>.

We have also contributed - alongside other public and private stakeholders - to the vitally important Communication on integrated approach to cultural heritage which the European Commission is expected to adopt next week, upon the initiative of Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner in charge of Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth. Finally, we are very pleased that the recent EC Communication on a European strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism stresses that proper conservation and management of cultural and natural resources are a pre-requisite for a sustainable development of tourism in coastal and maritime areas of Europe<sup>2</sup>.

As you know, we have also actively contributed to the "New Narrative for Europe" initiative launched under your leadership and with your strong personal engagement. The text of the "New Narrative for Europe" puts a strong emphasis on the necessity for Europe to be the champion of sustainability not only on the European but also on the global scene.

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<sup>1</sup> Council of the European Union Conclusions on cultural heritage as a strategic resource for a sustainable Europe, Brussels, 20 May 2014

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/142705.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/142705.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, A European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal and Maritime Tourism, Brussels, 20 February 2014

[http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/coastal\\_tourism/documents/com\\_2014\\_86\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/coastal_tourism/documents/com_2014_86_en.pdf)



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In the light of the above, we wish to urge you - and through you the European Commission - to use your vital influence for ensuring a development of economy, and especially tourism in Greece which would be sustainable, and not a development with short-term economic gains which are contrary to the principles and policies promoted by the European Union.

You should be aware that currently, the Greek government argues that the proposed new law regarding its coastline is prepared upon instigation from the European Union. In his reply to the question posed by Greek MEP Mr. Chountis dated 20<sup>th</sup> May, Commissioner Kallas appears indeed to confirm EC's position that Greece has an obligation to enact new legislation regarding its coastline in order to encourage strategic investments and privatizations. However, Commissioner Kallas does not mention Greece's other basic and unquestionable obligations, namely to protect the conservation areas of the Natura 2000 network, to protect its archeological sites and cultural heritage and to pursue a strategy of sustainable development with due respect for all relevant EU policies. We indeed very much hope that in future the European Commission's involvement in Greece will seek to ensure a more integrated approach to achieving many different, but complementary policy goals and targets.

More specifically, we wish to express our particular concern in respect of the following provisions of the draft law submitted to the Hellenic Parliament:

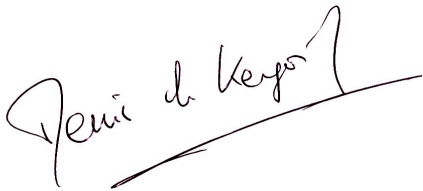
- a) The possibility of legalisation by entrepreneurs of existing illegal constructions on the coastline and the shore.
- b) The abolition of all restrictions on the grant of the coastline for private commercial use.
- c) The exclusion from any protective measure of the banks of many large lakes and rivers, which constitute a precious ecological resource.
- d) The evident neglect of a whole range of European and national legislation which insist on the protection of the coastal zone (eg. Integrated Coastal Zone Management Protocol).
- e) The lack of reference to European regulations and national law for the protection of biodiversity and the safeguard of conservation areas (like the Natura 2000 areas).
- f) The encouragement of permanent constructions on the coastline by private individuals for entrepreneurial purposes.

Given your influential position as the President of the European Commission, and given your proven strong commitment in promoting Europe's culture, heritage and environment, we urge you to intervene with the Greek government in order to make necessary amendments to the proposed law currently under consideration by the Hellenic Parliament, with the view of ensuring full respect of a wide range of relevant EU policies and regulations. We believe that the proposed law must give special attention to ensuring due safeguard of the coastline on the Greek islands, which constitute a key resource for a sustainable tourism development in Greece. This would represent a major benefit for Greece's economic, environmental and social development, and also an admirable achievement for yourself as the President of the European Commission.



Thanking you in advance for the urgent attention which you would be prepared to give to the concerns of Europe's civil society committed to safeguarding our cultural and natural heritage for future generations, and staying at your disposal for providing you with additional information which you might wish to obtain,

Yours sincerely,



Denis de Kergorlay  
Executive President



Costa Carras  
Vice-President

**Copies:**

**Maria Damanaki**, Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

**Conie Hedegaard**, Commissioner for Climate Action

**Siim Kallas**, Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs

**Janez Potocnik**, Commissioner for Environment

**Androulla Vassiliou**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth

