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**Statement by
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Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of H.E. the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic Ms. Dora Bakoyannis, who unfortunately could not be in New York today, I would like to address to the General Assembly the following statement.

Allow me first to congratulate the President of this august body, H.E. Dr. Ali Abdussalam Treki. I am confident that your extensive prior experience will serve us well and guide us through the trials we are called upon to address. I would also like to pay tribute to H.E. Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, for his tireless efforts to promote the work of the General Assembly during the 63rd Session.

I cannot but take pride in addressing the General Assembly of the most important ecumenical institution mankind has ever created, the original idea of which was initially conceived and put into practice by Greeks, twenty-five centuries ago.

Ancient Greek Amphictyony is the precursor and the matrix of the concept of multilateralism, which is the only way to deal effectively with the many and varied challenges faced by the international community. The United Nations is in fact, along with the various regional alliances and organisations, the essential framework for joining forces and collectively confronting our common threats and promoting our common values.

Greece currently has the privilege of being at the helm of one of the most important regional security organizations, the OSCE. Its consensus-based decision-making process, along with its comprehensive approach to security, is a testament to the power of multilateralism. Greece pledged to be an honest broker. To work with every single participating state to realize the common vision for peace, security and development for all 56. The Corfu Process, our common promise to turn the page on European Security within the framework of a structured all-inclusive dialogue, proves once more that where there is a will there is a way.

Indeed ladies and gentlemen,

Our annual gathering at the UN is important, but it is not enough. What is needed first and foremost is political will. Will to turn words into deeds.

We stand before a most critical juncture for our environmental, social and economic future. And all of us – policy makers, diplomats, scientists, activists and concerned citizens alike – have a responsibility to preserve the habitability of our planet and hand over to our children a better world than the one endowed to us.

It was Aristotle who said that: "Nature acts as if she foresees the future." And currently nature's auguries are not encouraging at all.

We cannot afford to forget that our planet is in a state of environmental emergency. Scientific evidence on the issue is compelling. The socio-economic impact of climate change on the global economy, if left unchecked, is likely to dwarf the current economic recession. Now is the time to speed up our joint efforts to effectively address the negative impact of climate change, while respecting the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities of each country. Copenhagen will be the litmus test of our commitment to an ambitious, all-inclusive climate change agreement.

The urgency of the situation is such that, if I may paraphrase the man who first conquered the moon, even if man now makes a giant leap in trying to mitigate the consequences of climate change, it will unfortunately still only be a small step for mankind. But small steps are important too. Greece continues to strongly support financing of climate change adaptation and mitigation projects and of low-carbon development strategies. We have repeatedly proven our commitment to this effect by supporting the most vulnerable countries' adaptation to climate change through the provision of a total sum of 21 million euros through the end of 2011.

The challenges posed to all nations by the current economic crisis require an ambitious and imaginative range of responses that provide effective and lasting solutions. The UN can play a vital role in achieving these objectives. Our commitment to the Millennium Development Goals needs to be reaffirmed. Regenerating the world economy and promoting sustainable pro-growth policies are fundamental to solving the crisis, as well as essential to maintaining and improving progress towards the achievement of the MDGs. Support for the most vulnerable nations, further affected by food security and climate change, is where special effort must be made.

Our action against hunger and want has not yet produced the desired results, while humanitarian and development aid needs to be streamlined, in order to be more effective and productive. Synergetic multilateral action is urgently needed. The people living on the edge are out of time. They need to know whether the decisions of their leaders at the Pittsburgh summit are the right decisions; decisions that will put us back on the road to development.

We know that climate change, the economic crisis and the North-South Divide are exacerbating pressures to migrate. They are creating living conditions that are among the greatest disgraces of humanity, the greatest insults to human dignity: the modern slave trade, human trafficking. Some 192 million people have been forced from the lands of their birth. Two of these people – they destroyed their papers to hide their identities – drowned in the Aegean on 12 August. They had paid traffickers in Turkey to take them to Greece so that they could seek a better future in Europe. These people have been lost, but we owe it to them to change things. To fight traffickers. To work together to discourage illegal migration by giving development and a vision to the countries migrants leave. Athens is hosting the Global Forum on Migration and Development from 2 to 5 November. We want specific proposals for actions and policies. We want to formulate best practices for adoption by the participating states.

Mr. President,

Terrorism continues to present a serious threat to international peace, stability and security. International commitment to confront terrorism must remain strong and our efforts to successfully address this challenge should be intensified. But if our efforts are to be successful and self-sustaining, they must garner the broadest possible consensus and acceptance, and be based on respect for the fundamental principles of international law and international humanitarian law and on the full respect and protection of human rights.

That brings me to the issue which has come to the fore of international attention and concern: that is the issue of human rights. Respect for human rights is one of the cornerstones of contemporary legal order and human rights conventions and institutions have raised the awareness and sensitivity of states, governments, civil society, international organizations and NGOs.

Greece has submitted her candidacy for the UN Human Rights Council for the period 2012-2015, wishing to play a proactive role in the protection of human rights. We believe that the UN HRC, can play a crucial role in the improvement of the situation of human rights worldwide. It should not be restricted to pointing to the violators, but should mainly help overcome the shortfalls and implement the universal standards.

Interest in the protection of human rights must be genuine and anthropocentric. And protection must be carried out in full compliance with the fundamental principles of international law and the UN Charter. We should award a special place in the system of human rights protection to gender issues. Women's rights need all our attention, because in many corners of the world they continue to be violated systematically and flagrantly. Education and equal working opportunities are key areas.

Mr. President,

As I said earlier, Greece approached her current term in office as OSCE Chair with a heightened sense of responsibility and sensitivity, based on the belief that security and stability are not and should not be a zero-sum game. In the post-Cold War era, where security

challenges are multifaceted and interlinked, the security needs of all states should be given due consideration despite contradictory and often mutually exclusive political perceptions of what is right and just.

Since January, our aim has been to build consensus and to achieve collective and comprehensive solutions to deep-rooted and protracted conflicts, convinced that enhancing the security of one will undoubtedly enhance the security of the whole. Our efforts have been based on mutual trust and confidence, and on the realization that security is both indivisible and comprehensive. In some cases however, as in Georgia, consensus has been elusive.

Our most important collective achievement has been the launching of the "Corfu process", a profound and open debate on the future of Security in Europe. The Corfu Process marks a pan-European effort to revisit and redefine the broader European security system. At the Athens Ministerial Meeting in December we aim to lay a solid foundation so that our dialogue will start producing tangible results.

A few days ago the Security Council adopted Resolution 1887, thus taking an important step in the direction of advancing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We applaud this important decision. Yet, practical tools are essential for the achievement of high political goals such as this. Greece firmly believes that the NPT remains the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Broad participation in it – along with the conclusion of comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and the Implementation of the Additional Protocol – is beyond any doubt the most effective answer to threats of nuclear proliferation. It is equally important to have additional ratifications of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the early drafting of the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty.

As regards major international and regional issues, conflicts and flashpoints, Greece fully subscribes to the EU policy and action, as described by the Presidency. The role of the EU in the handling of a number of urgent and difficult situations, such as piracy in Somalia, has proved to be vital, successful and effective.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The broader region of South-eastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean is at the forefront of Greek foreign policy. It is a vital region from a geopolitical and geostrategic perspective, but also one of the most volatile areas of the world.

Our vision for the region is the consolidation of security, stability and development. Our aim is to work with all neighboring states in the region to promote stability, democracy and robust economies, with the ultimate goal of elevating the quality of life of the citizens to the top of European standards.

This vision is founded on four pillars:

First, the establishment and safeguarding of good neighbourly relations.

Second, the full integration of all the countries of South-Eastern Europe into the European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

Third, the enhancement and further deepening of regional cooperation in the fields of infrastructure, economy and trade.

And, last but not least, the strengthening of bonds and cultural interaction at the level of civil societies.

We are doing everything in our power to materialize this vision.

We continue to build upon the Agenda of the Thessaloniki European Council of 2003, which laid the foundations for the integration of the Western Balkan countries into the EU – on the condition, of course, that the accession criteria and requirements are fully met. The European perspective of almost all the Western Balkan countries is now within reach and seems more feasible than ever before.

At the same time, Greece is promoting regional cooperation through financing and participating in significant infrastructure projects and by joining forces with other neighbouring countries to establish a reliable and adequate energy distribution network. It is one of the top

investment and trade partners in most of the neighbouring countries, thus contributing to the development of the entire area. Above all, we work hard to establish and consolidate good neighborly relations by pursuing and promoting the peaceful settlement of disputes on the basis of international law.

However, long-standing disputes persist. For the past 15 years Greece has participated in UN-led negotiations on the issue of the name of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Greece has participated in good faith. Regrettably, no substantive or tangible progress has been made so far, despite the fact that Greece has taken a huge step towards a compromise. We have accepted the use of the term 'Macedonia' along with a geographical qualifier that reflects reality. Of the large geographical region of Macedonia, only a part falls within our neighbor's territory. So how can this country claim exclusive rights to the name? The persistence of the leadership in Skopje in pursuing exclusivity over the name by denying a geographic qualifier and the anachronistic rhetoric and policies that run contrary to the principle of good neighborly relations, raise serious questions as to its real motives. Greece is negotiating for a solution that will respect the dignity of both countries and of both peoples. We are negotiating for a clear solution that both sides will agree to and that our neighbor will use with pride in its dealings with everyone. A solution that will make everyone a winner.

Mr. President,

The Cyprus issue is still an open wound at the very heart of Europe. Thanks to the efforts of President Christofias, a new round of talks has started under UN auspices. This gives rise to hope, but there is still a long way to go, full of hurdles and difficulties. Greece supports a definitive, sustainable and just solution, on the basis of the UN resolutions and compatible with the EU's values, principles and institutional framework, which will lead to the reunification of the island.

We strongly believe that the two communities should be left alone, with no external pressures, guidance or interventions, to decide on their common future. The solution must be theirs and theirs alone. Artificial deadlines, strict timeframes and threats of a permanent division have no role in the quest of a durable solution. They add unnecessary pressure and strain to the delicate negotiating process and raise questions about the true intentions of those promoting them.

The current situation in Cyprus is unacceptable. Turkish military forces continue to occupy part of the territory of an EU member state. Turkey – an EU candidate – refuses to recognize a fully fledged EU member and future partner. Once vibrant cities like Famagusta remain ghost towns. The families of the missing persons continue to wonder about their loved ones' fates, while the unspeakable atrocities of the past come to light, little by little. This picture is unimaginable in the eyes of the average European citizen and completely incompatible with today's European reality.

We hope that the Cypriot people – both Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots – will be able to leave behind the painful past and look reunited to the future that comes within the European family, which constitutes the best guarantee for their security and prosperity. Turkey, which holds the key to the solution of the Cyprus issue, knows well that such a solution would also speed up its own course to the EU.

Mr. President,

Greece is probably the most sincere supporter of Turkey's accession to the EU. And this at a difficult time. It is our conviction that Turkey would be a better neighbor for Greece if it carried out all necessary reforms and became an EU member state. Turkish membership would contribute to stability in our region. Yet, this is not a blank check. Nor is it a leap of faith. In order to become a member of the EU, Turkey will have to fulfill all criteria set by the European Union.

The government I represent has invested in Greek-Turkish rapprochement. Kostas Karamanlis is the first Greek Prime Minister to have paid an official visit to Ankara in 40 years. We dared to turn the page. We went beyond words, but we have not seen an active response

from the other side. Turkey declares that it wants 'zero problems' with its neighbors. Yet, Turkish fighter jets kept flying only a few meters over the rooftops of Greek islanders homes throughout the summer. The Turkish Parliament maintains a threat of war against my country.

Disputes should be settled peacefully and in accordance with international law. UNCLOS, which embodies customary law, shows the way to settle maritime boundary disputes peacefully. Greece would welcome a decision by Turkey to follow the example of the other 160 members of the UN who have ratified the UNCLOS. Such a move, along with clear political will on the Turkish side to invest in friendly relations with Greece, could strike a definitive blow to tensions and mistrust in our bilateral relations and contribute to the promotion of peace and stability in our entire region.

Mr. President,

Aristotle proposed that "it is possible to fail in many ways, while to succeed is possible in only one way." It is our conviction that this 'one way' is effective multilateralism led by the UN.

We need the leadership of the UN if we are to carry out our ultimate mission: safeguarding the dignity, lives and freedoms of the citizens we represent. We need to give the Secretary General – whom we elected – the tools to guide this Organization so that it can once again take up its central role in international life. So that the UN can meet the myriad challenges facing humanity. We have to identify the UN's weaknesses and have the courage to redress them using common sense. Just as we would do at home. As we would do in our countries. Because every failure of the UN is a personal failure for each and every one of us. Because the world is changing, and we have to change with it.

Thank you.

