



GREENPEACE



Athens, October 4th 2023

Subject: 13 Greek civil society organisations call for European legislation to ensure strong emission reductions by businesses

Dear Executive Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič and Commissioner Didier Reynders,
Dear Members of the relevant Cabinets following climate issues,

As representatives of civil society in a country that experienced the dramatic impacts of the climate crisis in recent months through a series of successive disasters, such as the fires in Rhodes and Evros which burnt uncontrolled for days, and the unprecedented and extensively destructive floods, we call on you to advocate for a coordinated, unwavering and clear EU climate policy. Special focus is needed in relation to the climate footprint of the business sector.

The recent disasters, which brought our country's fire-fighting and disaster response systems to their heels, have had a dramatic impact on the economy, society and natural ecosystems of Greece. The loss of life and the extent of burnt and flooded land have seriously degraded the livelihoods of tens of thousands of people and delivered a strong blow to the country's economy. The most vivid example is Thessaly, where last month's floods resulted in the deaths of 17 people and 100,000 animals¹, wiped out a quarter of the national agricultural production capacity and led to losses of billions of euros². Storm Daniel, the weather system that caused the extreme rainfall, has scientifically been attributed to climate change³.

Climate change can no longer be an excuse for inaction or fatalistic adherence to the failed business-as-usual model of high and unreported carbon emissions. In all of Europe, swift and effective action is needed in relation to the environmental footprint of the business sector, with a view to a rapid and robust reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. If the root causes of climate change and environmental degradation in general are not effectively addressed, these impacts are certain to worsen significantly in the coming years.

The EU must play a leading role in the fight to achieve climate neutrality and nature protection, by supporting strong environmental and climate policies and strengthening the relevant

¹ Ministry of Rural Development and Food. (2023, 21 September). [Press Release](#).

² AP News. (16 September 2023). [The cost of damage from the record floods in Greece's breadbasket is estimated to be in the trillions](#); RFI, 15 September 2023, [Floods wiped out quarter of Greek farm produce: experts](#).

³ World Weather Attribution. (2023, 19 September). [Interplay of climate change-exacerbated rainfall, exposure and vulnerability led to widespread impacts in the Mediterranean region](#)

legislation. However, although emissions from large companies play an important role in amplifying climate change, the EU has taken only limited, indirect measures to incentivise companies to reduce emissions and protect our people, economy and environment from the growing impacts of global warming. While EU legislation is increasingly encouraging large businesses to develop corporate-level climate neutrality transition plans to align their operations with the Paris Agreement targets, no EU-level law requires businesses in all sectors to actually implement these plans on an entity level and substantially reduce their emissions. We see this as a major gap in the EU's efforts to ensure that its economy supports climate targets and provides for dealing with the consequences.

In February 2022, the European Commission presented its proposal for the crucial **Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD)** which aims to end harmful corporate practices that negatively affect both the state of the environment and the lives of people in every corner of the planet. **The Directive**, which is currently at the final stage of negotiations in Brussels, **could be the central policy tool that, by its Article 15, obliges all large companies to develop and implement transition plans** with science-based absolute emission reduction targets.

Requiring large companies in the EU to implement their transition plans is proportionate and necessary. The requirement should come with an obligation of means and not an obligation of results. That is, companies should be expected to implement their plan effectively and align their activities with the EU's carbon neutrality target by 2050, but they should not be held responsible if the EU fails to meet its targets or if temperature rise exceeds 1.5°C. Furthermore, with climate change already affecting agriculture, tourism and other critical sectors in Greece and the EU, and with 97% of global executives agreeing that it will affect their business strategy and operations over the next three years⁴, ensuring that companies address climate issues is also essential for their own resilience and competitiveness.

Considering the above, we call on you to take political leadership and to support a strong and forward-looking Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive that requires larger companies throughout the EU to both develop and implement transition plans. The need for the business sector to not just plan, but to contribute substantially towards minimising its emissions is non-negotiable, if the EU truly wishes to protect its people and economy in and beyond Greece.

Our common goal must be to build resilient, zero-emission economies, through robust policies and regulations that protect the climate and natural ecosystems and shield society from the catastrophic impacts of the environmental crisis.

Yours sincerely,

The co-signatory organisations

1. WWF Greece
2. Greenpeace Greece
3. ANIMA
4. Callisto
5. Ecological Recycling Society
6. Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature
7. Hellenic Ornithological Society (Birdlife Greece)
8. MEDASSET
9. Society for the Protection of Prespa
10. Nomos + Physis
11. Vouliwatch
12. Hellenic League for Human Rights
13. Elliniki Etairia - Society for the Environment and Cultural Heritage

⁴ Deloitte study of over 2000 C-level executives from 24 countries. Deloitte. (2023). [CxO Sustainability Report](#).