

***Speech of Mr Georgios Vlachos, Chairman of the Committee on
Production and Trade of the Hellenic Parliament***

Croatia, Zagreb 10/9/2014

Distinguished guests,

Tourism constitutes a fundamental pillar of the Greek economy, accounting about 16.3% of the national GDP and employing, directly and indirectly, approximately 1.000.000 jobs in Greece. That is one in every five jobs.

In 2013, a truly landmark year, the total number of tourist arrivals reached the all-time-high of 18 million, not accounting for another 2 million from the cruise industry. In terms of revenues, that meant approx. 12.000.000 Euros, also an all-time-high.

The year 2014 - according to the data from the Bank of Greece - seems to be another record year. Various forecasts agree that we may be looking at an annual growth of approximately 20%

The political stability since 2012, the acknowledgement that Greece is a safe destination, and our initiatives aiming to incorporate sustainable forms of tourism to our core product, are the fundamental causes of this success.

Applying an integrated tourism development model while, at the same time, preserving intact our touristic assets, presuppose ambitious reforms leading to new products.

The Ministry of Tourism and the GNTO's policy is aiming to enhance the diversification of the tourist product, to support a balanced and year-long flow of visitors and, of course, to promote the landscape, natural and built. This spectrum of qualities facilitate the application of environmentally sustainable practices.

The above is our new mix, that results in fairer consumption of resources, higher yield, and a broader tourism season, and most importantly, a viable and sustainable product.

We believe and invest on the concept of sustainable development as a process of qualitative change that can be applied to all types of tourist destinations, **including places not yet developed in touristic terms.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank you for the initiative of this congress, which will offer very useful input to all participants in order to advance the strategic concept of sustainable tourism development, for the years to come.

I wish every success.