

**MINISTRY OF INTERIOR
GOVERNMENT OF THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC
SECRETARIAT GENERAL
OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND E-GOVERNMENT**

**Minister of Interior
Prof. Prokopios Pavlopoulos
Welcome Address
(English Version)**

Athens, 11 November 2008

Good morning,

On behalf of the Government of the Hellenic Republic, I welcome you to Athens, the birthplace of good governance; of democratic governance, the objective of our Project.

Our country applauds your Project and welcomes you to Greece, quite close, in fact, to Delphi, which witnessed the creation of arguably one of the first international organizations – the Amphiktyoniae, a global organization – which, in the days of Pericles, gathered all Hellenic cities around the Mediterranean.

Together, we are engaged in rebuilding a new “amphiktyoniae” for all of Eastern Europe, Central Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States; one that goes from Zagreb to Vladivostock and from neighbouring Albania to Kyrgyzstan.

It was time, because our Region, encompassing some thirty countries with common traits, kin languages and closely connected interests not only was divided for a long period of time but also, up to a point, isolated from the rest of the world.

With the end of isolation, it is extremely important to plan for the reinforcement of ties between the countries and peoples of this Region and to expand the scope, contacts, and exchanges among them.

These societies are rich in natural resources, as well as other resources; privileged as regards the wealth of talents, high-level skills and know-how. A “trade” in high-level skills still needs to be organized and amplified.

These then are the main challenges to which the new Project must answer. Because of shared concerns, as well as a new agreement, UNDP/BRC headquartered in Bratislava and the Hellenic Authorities have organized this Project whose goal is to maintain and to consolidate a framework and a network which favour and facilitated exchanges of information, research, expertise and know-how in public administration, as well as the interchange of high-level specialists in Human Resources Management and Development for the State and Public Service.

It all depends upon us. Already in Alexandroupolis, almost two years ago, the BRC and ourselves laid the bases of this Project. Its principal concern was to respond to needs expressed through the demands made by our Project partners in the countries of the Region.

Today, some two years later, thanks to the research work conducted under Bratislava's auspices, we have a solid plan entirely demand-driven, reflecting the needs of our Region to which we now turn our attention.

A new Centre is in place. Already in existence for a few months, it will be soon equipped with facilities and premises, in Athens, although as in the past, we shall hold the project activities mostly in Northern Greece – Macedonia and Thrace – as well as in other countries of the Region.

Our hope is to establish at some early future date, a UNDP House in Athens, in order to facilitate the initiation of projects and their management from Athens for our Region as a whole.

Your counterparts in Greece and our Government are ready to be of help. They have the needed exposure and experience acquired in recent years. Of course, we must admit that a certain transparency deficit allied to a lack of good governance on the part of UN authorities, at Headquarters in New York, led over time to wastage of effort and resources. However, that was in the past. In looking to the future, as we now do, we must remember the past only for lessons learnt.

The new partnership, which we are now trying to establish, has been founded on trust. But trust is based on respect and on a regular and thorough exchange of information. This is what we look for: a solid and productive partnership, administered efficiently, but also transparently managed by a Project and a Centre, which are duly autonomous and accountable to all stakeholders on their actions – activities that must respond to the wishes of the countries, they are called upon to serve.

With these few words, allow me to thank you for your attention and to wish you all success. In wish you “good work”.