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**Statement by
H.E. Mr. Dimitris L. Avramopoulos
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic**

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**Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Je tiens à remercier le Président sortant de la 66ème session de l'Assemblée Générale, M. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser de l'Etat du Qatar, et à féliciter M. Vuk Jeremic de la République de Serbie pour son élection au poste du Président de la 67ème session de l'Assemblée Générale. Je tiens également à exprimer ma gratitude à notre Secrétaire General, M. Ban Ki-moon, qui continue à guider notre Organisation sans relâche au sein d'un environnement global qui change constamment. Je saisis cette occasion pour aligner les positions de mon pays à celles exprimées dans la déclaration faite par l'Union Européenne.

La Grèce continue à être pleinement engagée avec les Nations Unies, dévouées aux objectifs de la paix, de la sécurité et à l'amélioration du niveau de vie des gens partout dans le monde, afin qu'ils puissent vivre en dignité.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the recent High Level Meeting on the Rule of Law, the UN member states reaffirmed their commitment to one of the most important principles, underlying international order, that should be our guide in the conduct of diplomacy and international relations. We fully agree with the UN Secretary General's statement: freedom of expression is a "fundamental" right and privilege of all people, without any discrimination which, however, should not be abused by anyone in a disgraceful and shameful way.

Unfortunately, there are those who will do everything to provoke, as we have witnessed again recently, with the provocative and unacceptable movie which denigrates Islam. Nevertheless, we strongly condemn any form of violence, and in this particular case against diplomatic missions. There is no justification for them. After all, the measure and limit of every right is the respect of the right of the other.

Dear Colleagues,

Greece is dedicated to the UN's efforts to enhance international cooperation on the promotion and protection of human rights. We have, thus, decided to present our candidacy for membership in the Human Rights Council for the 2013-2015 term. Also, in this framework, we support the adoption of the EU Strategy on Human Rights and Democracy, as well as the appointment of an EU Special Representative for Human Rights, as an important step towards a more coherent EU policy and approach to human dignity.

The need to respect and protect human rights and humanitarian law, is now as urgent as ever. In fact, illegal migration in the Mediterranean region, has given rise to a humanitarian crisis. This is why Greece has introduced major legislative and institutional reforms in the fields of asylum and migration.

Dear Colleagues,

I now turn to one of the main pillars of UN action: peace and security. Greece's neighbourhood, has often been at the centre of serious interlinked security challenges. My country has consistently played a stabilizing role. We have accomplished this through the pursuit of a policy of peaceful resolution of disputes – within the framework of the UN Charter – based on respect for international law and the principles of sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Despite the economic and financial crisis, Greece has continued to participate actively in a number of UN missions and operations around the world: in Kosovo and Afghanistan, and in the anti-piracy efforts off the coast of Somalia.

Dear Colleagues,

Security in the Middle East remains a crucial quest for the countries of the region and the world community. Greece maintains historic ties of friendship, cooperation and mutual respect with its neighbors in North Africa and the Middle East; countries that, following the momentous events of the Arab Spring, are moving towards successful electoral processes, and towards building democratic institutions.

The EU should be there, right by their side, as they build their future. However, we have not seen successful outcomes everywhere. In Syria, demonstrations faced battle tanks and a brutal crack-down. On numerous occasions, we have called on President Assad to open the way for a transitional authority, comprising all sections of Syrian society. Yet, we are still in a prolonged bloody stalemate that jeopardizes the present and the future of the Syrian people and stability in our region. 29.000 victims, 250.000 refugees, 2,5 million Syrian citizens in need.

We are convinced that a Syrian-led political solution is still achievable, and we see no alternative to such a solution. Greece believes that there is no military solution, to the Syrian problem. Peace and security in the Eastern Mediterranean cannot be achieved without a just, lasting and comprehensive solution of the Palestinian issue, on the basis of a two-state solution. We regret the prolonged stagnation in the direct negotiations between the two parties. It is only through negotiations that peace can finally be achieved. We believe that unilateral actions can not fulfill Israel's quest for security or Palestinians' aspirations for statehood, which we fully support. The two-state solution should remain feasible on the ground.

Dear Colleagues,

I would now like to outline the current position on some salient issues concerning our immediate neighbourhood.

The issue of the name of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is, beyond its semantic dimension, an important piece in the puzzle of putting to rest irredentist notions and attempts to rewrite history in our region. I was informed of what the representative of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia said today in the General Assembly. Distorting reality in front of the entire international community and using 19th century rhetoric in the 21st century is counter-productive and will lead us nowhere.

Populism and nationalism is the worst possible mix for the promotion of anyone's national interests and the stability of our region. Greece believes that the solution lies in a fair settlement:

A name with a geographical qualifier, since Macedonia is a geographical region that overlaps the territories of three countries, the largest part in Greece and then Bulgaria and FYROM. And, of course, this name must be used in relation to everyone – *erga omnes*.

When we resolve this issue, we will be able to realize the vast potential in our relations, to our mutual benefit, and Greece will be the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's staunchest ally and friend in its efforts to realize its Euroatlantic aspirations. After all, Greece is the most important economic partner with large presence of Greek companies operating in FYROM.

We also support the EU-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, and we welcome the constructive approach to these talks on the part of the Serbian leadership. Dialogue is the only way to resolve problems in Kosovo, while unilateral measures and escalation, especially in the North, should be avoided by all means.

In less than two years from now, Greece's EU Presidency will launch "Agenda 2014", which aims to reinvigorate the European perspectives of all our neighbours in the Western Balkans.

Elsewhere in our immediate neighbourhood, Greece is consistently pursuing stronger cooperation with Turkey, through a wide range of initiatives, so that we can improve our relations to the benefit of both peoples. Moreover, Greece continues to support Turkey's candidacy for full membership in the European family, on the condition, of course, that all relevant membership criteria are met and that the necessary reforms are carried out. It is of the utmost importance that Turkey gives tangible signs of full respect for international law and abandon attitudes like the standing threat of "casus belli" against Greece, or its attitude vis-à-vis Cyprus, which undermines efforts to build trust.

This brings us to the Eastern Mediterranean as a whole, where Greece continues to play its role as a factor of peace and stability.

Greece supports the efforts of the government of the Republic of Cyprus to pursue negotiations with the Turkish Cypriot community, under UN auspices, aimed ultimately, at reuniting the island, according to UN resolutions and taking into account the fact that the Republic of Cyprus, is a member of the European Union, currently holding the EU Presidency. However, after 38 years, the division of the island continues and the results of the talks have been disappointing, due to the Turkish-Cypriot intransigence to engage in constructive talks. We applaud Cyprus' decision to act on its sovereign right to exploit the natural gas deposits in its exclusive economic zone.

We are forging partnerships with other emerging energy players in the region, including Israel and the Arab countries, with whom we enjoy traditional relations of friendship and trust. Greece, is contributing to bringing stability and economic growth to the Eastern Mediterranean, in order to promote energy security and diversification of sources and suppliers for the European energy markets. A resolution of the Cyprus issue would have a tremendously positive effect, not just for the Cypriots themselves, but for Greek-Turkish relations and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean as a whole.

Dear Colleagues,

I will close with a few words about the economic crisis that Greece is confronting with the help of its partners in the EU and the international community. The new tripartite coalition

government in Greece, is implementing an ambitious Economic Adjustment Programme in order to improve its macroeconomic outlook and achieve fiscal adjustment, while at the same time addressing structural reforms aiming for growth and job creation.

This effort has produced impressive results; namely, the primary deficit has been significantly reduced. At the same time, the Greek economy has regained more than 50% of its competitiveness towards its global trade partners, while the business and investment climate is on a positive path. We are determined to continue along this path, bearing in mind that Greek people are suffering tremendously from the austerity program implementation.

In a broader view, it is evident that this crisis is not just Greek or European. International economies are intertwined and therefore this is also a global crisis. In this respect, we need to examine measures aimed at generating all-inclusive and job-creating growth; measures that will regenerate economies and diminish the social impact of the crisis.

Dear Colleagues,

The Eurozone, with Greece at the forefront, is making a hard and painstaking effort and adopts new paths and ways to exit the deep economic crisis. The pivotal role and geopolitical importance of Greece in Southeast Europe, in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East will emerge as a result of the events unfolding in our neighbourhood. It is, indeed, a stabilizing role, since our vital national interests are aligned with the promotion of peace, stability, prosperity and regional security. Our advantage is, not only our geographic position, but also our strong political will to become a cornerstone of stability and security, at a time when uncertainty dangerously threatens our region.

Dear Colleagues,

During the last two years, Greece has been portrayed by the global media as a country defined by its economic need. It is true, that our country is experiencing a painful transition leading to economic recovery and growth. It is also true, that the Greek people have known in their 3000 years of history crises more serious than the present one. We survived. We excelled. Let me assure the General Assembly and the family of nations that Greece will make it.

We will make it because Greece is larger than its geographical size and more precious than its present fiscal reality. Through knowledge, science and art, Greece is there when progress takes place. Through democracy Greece is present as a global civilization. Through Olympism Greece unites humanity. Through our merchant fleet and our maritime tradition we carry the goods of the world. Through our love for life we constantly remind the world that progress should always be measured by the human scale. Through and by our legacy we will make it once more.

We will make it because Greece is not about asking. Greece is about offering. Lets not forget, that Greece is a value that is in the hearts and minds of people irrespective of nationhood, race and religion. And that gives us the moral power, the support and the encouragement, along with our partners in Europe, to give and to win this fight.

Thank you for your attention.