



PNoWB

MEDIA ADVISORY



World Bank

Southeast Europe Parliamentarians to Meet from September 29-30

ATHENS, GREECE, September 27, 2006—This weekend, the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNoWB), with the support of the Hellenic Parliament and in cooperation with the World Bank and the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), is convening 40 parliamentarians from Southeast Europe from September 29-30 around the theme, *“Towards A Common Economic Space in Southeast Europe.”*

Parliamentarians from Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, FYR of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Turkey have been invited to attend the conference where they will meet World Bank experts and donors, including European institutions, the IMF, Stability Pact, and others.

Featured speakers at the conference include Greek Economy and Finance Minister George Alogoskoufis and Greek MP and former EU Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou.

“The Balkans belong to the European family,” said **Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis**. *“That is why it is important for parliamentarians from all over the region to discuss solutions to issues we all face in Southeast Europe, so that we can build a common economic space that can bring greater prosperity and a brighter future for the region’s people. For its part, Greece is committed to the region’s European future and is determined to do all it can to build a more affluent and stable Southeast Europe.”*

Created in early 2000, PNoWB has grown to include members from some 110 countries. The Network now has national and regional chapters in India, East Africa, Japan and Middle East/North Africa.

“It is vital that parliamentarians take responsibility for economic and social policies in their countries, they must engage with and check international financial institutions like the World Bank,” said **Bert Koenders, a Member of Parliament from The Netherlands and Chairman of the PNoWB**. *“The meeting of Southeast European parliamentarians comes at a critical time in the process of EU integration, with all of the invited countries being actively involved in various stages of discussions with the EU. PNoWB aims to engage them on what actions can be taken now in parallel to that process to achieve closer economic ties, reduce poverty, and improve cooperation within the region.”*

Greek Members of Parliament Nikos Christodoulakis and Kyriakos Mitsotakis said this weekend’s meeting will explore the idea of creating an informal branch of the PNoWB of interested parliamentarians from the Southeast European region. It is important that MPs gather to discuss critical issues such as strategies for growth and perspectives of common welfare in the years to come. History shows that lack of cooperation and common understanding may be very harmful whereas consensual cooperation can advance economic performance and provide synergies leading to innovation.

Mr. Mitsotakis underlined that: “*Southeast European countries have undergone deep and at times rather difficult transitions and reforms. But tangible achievements can today be clearly seen throughout the region. International organizations must continue supporting these efforts to further consolidate cooperation sectors such as energy and transportation, and to foster an economic environment attractive to foreign investors.*”

Mr. Christodoulakis further emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts: “*The World Bank and other organizations, along with the European Union have worked closely with the public and private sectors across Southeast Europe to successfully move from transition to growth and set up the necessary economic frameworks and policies. It is important now that we move even further to create a common economic space; to do this effectively, we also need to find appropriate solutions to migration pressures and we need functioning labour markets. Targeting the root causes of poverty, exclusion and inequality remain common priorities.*”

The World Bank welcomes the increasing role of parliamentarians in development. The world over, parliamentarians represent their constituents’ needs and views, and can contribute to designing and overseeing implementation of World Bank-financed projects. In many countries, Bank projects are subject to parliamentary approval directly through ratification or indirectly through budget approval. In some cases, parliamentarians create, debate and pass new legislation linked to World Bank-supported reform programs. In countries providing development assistance parliamentarians can be advocates for development. They debate and approve foreign aid budgets, shape and review development policies, and promote coherence across policy areas.

Conference: Towards a Common Economic Space in Southeast Europe

Venue: Grecotel Cape Sounion, Greece

Time: 3:30 pm, Friday, September 29-7 pm, Saturday, September 30

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To learn more about the Southeast European Parliamentarians Conference and for images and pictures, please go to <http://www.seerecon.org/calendar/2006/events/parliamentarians.html>