

**Introductory Remarks by Mr. Costis Stambolis, Deputy Chairman
and Executive Director of IENE**

Ladies & Gentlemen

Dear Delegates, Dear Friends,

May I once more welcome you to the annual Energy Dialogue of the SE Europe, now in its 5th year, in Thessaloniki. A town of special significance not only for Greece but for SE Europe. A city of multicultural background, the link of diverse civilizations, ancient and modern going back to classical Greece, to the Byzantine and then Othoman empires, a truly historic city. Today, a modern gate, in both physical and metaphysical terms, for the whole Balkan region, East and West. A city which can indeed play a key role as an energy bridge for the whole of SE Europe. It is truly the idea of a much needed “Energy Bridge” for the region that our Energy Dialogue wishes to promote more than anything else.

This year we are joined by two significant partners in our endeavour, namely the World Energy Council (WEC) which has participated in most previous meetings and the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) which participates in its capacity as both partner and sponsor. We warmly welcome their representatives Mr. Slav Slavov, regional manager of WEC and Mr. Saleh Jallad, CEO of MEES. On behalf of IENE may I say that we are most grateful for their valuable support and assistance in organizing this year’s event

The South East Europe Energy Dialogue (SEED) was originally conceived by the Institute of Energy for South East Europe - IENE-, (see www.iene.gr for further information) as an open forum for the identification of the key energy objectives, challenges and opportunities in Southeast Europe, together with the study and analysis of the regional energy infrastructure. In 2007 IENE organized the first SEED with the intention of bringing together senior governmental officials, corporate leaders, financiers, academics and energy experts from the South Europe and

beyond in order to discuss the crucial energy and environmental issues of the current geopolitical agenda. The aim was to stimulate a lively debate that could eventually help formulate sound regional energy policies and forge strong bonds between the numerous actors in the energy sector of South East Europe. Today, the SEEED is convened for the fifth consecutive year having become an established regional event and it is developing fast into a top-level regional meeting. IENE's objective is to further build up the SEEED into a multi-tier regional energy forum as an open and ongoing consultative process.

When addressing the issues of the region it is evident that the relatively small and fragmented states of SE Europe cannot any longer move alone and pursue truly independent energy policies. Even the largest states of the region such as Turkey, which enjoys a strong geopolitical position, need to develop close ties and partake into the energy policies at neighbouring countries, like Bulgaria and Greece, in order to advance their own energy agendas. A sense of interdependence becomes inevitable. As a result all countries should have their eyes set towards the broader region of South East Europe where the development of meaningful relations and cooperation should be a permanent objective. Therefore, the South East Europe Energy Dialogue signifies a major departure in the quest for understanding and participating in the energy developments of the region.

Four years after its original inception IENE's SEEED has emerged as the capital annual meeting for energy officials, policy makers, regulators, investors, senior company executives and entrepreneurs from the countries of South East Europe and beyond. The Dialogue constitutes a non-partisan, international and privately funded Forum where a community of experts would primarily feel at ease to exchange opinions, views and scientific analysis on the principal energy issues that drive the policy and market priorities in South East Europe and in the broader peripheral area.

Even though senior representatives from the region's governments, the EU, as well as from many regional and international organizations, such as the Energy Community, the Black Sea Energy. Cooperation and the International Energy Agency, have taken "centre stage" in the Forum's panels and events, IENE and the SEED,

which is organized by a multinational scientific committee, has remained neutral. SEED does not operate as a mean for the promotion of any specific national or corporate agenda. The informal nature of the meeting itself, of its various related events, such workshops and seminars conducted by IENE in the different capitals of the region throughout the year, and the ease of communication between members of the steering committee, ensure the independent and unbiased nature of the Forum.

That is why it has been able to involve senior-level players from within the region while simultaneously highlighting the region's importance in a strategic intra-regional context that includes the Persian Gulf, Russia, North Africa, and Central Asia. In this regard, the Forum has been particularly proud of its ability to attract speakers from countries as far as Iran, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Russia and the Arab Middle East.

The SEED functions as a multi-faceted "agora" (the Greek word for Forum) where ideas, policies and outlooks take measure of each others validity; where the organizers identify the common energy challenges, which public and private players would have to face in the pursuit of their individual interests.

This year's SEED which focuses on Electricity and Gas issues will hopefully rise to the challenge and prove to be once again a useful platform and point of reference. The organization of the 5th SEED would not have been possible without the active participation and financial support of a number of sponsors which include the Public Gas Corporation of Greece (DEPA SA), the leading regional independent power producer Protergia SA, and the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) which acted both as partner and sponsor. A number of Supporters were also involved which include the companies TERNAS SA, Elpedison SA, SIEMENS SA, and the KDGI and Norton Rose law firms. IENE and myself, as coordinator of this conference, are greatly indebted for their valuable support and confidence in the SEED concept. May I wish to all delegates a happy stay in Thessaloniki and a productive conference.