



Introductory Remarks by the Chairman of IENE, Costis Stambolis

Good afternoon to everyone and welcome to this year's Energy Dialogue event.

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors of the People's Republic of China, the United Kingdom and Azerbaijan,

Dear Partners of IENE,

Dear members of the Institute,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As always it is a great pleasure for me and our team at IENE to be here in Thessaloniki organising once again, the annual SEE Energy Dialogue, now in its 15th edition. A forward looking event which was first launched in this city back in June 2007.

Since the very start this colloquium has sought to bring together as many energy players from the broader SE European region, both from government and industry, and engage them in a fruitful dialogue focusing on the current energy agenda and the issues in hand while also looking beyond at the global picture and the great geopolitical challenges. The region, especially the Balkans and Turkey, situated in between the big Eurasia land mass and Europe proper and the East Mediterranean, is finding itself in a sensitive geopolitical environment.

And as we all know this is not just a figure of speech but has shaped into an ugly reality, with a fully fledged war in Ukraine and another one in Gaza. Even more unfortunate is that both conflicts are not showing signs of an early deescalation, with a negative impact already felt in the wider Middle East while energy markets are rattled with great uncertainty which impacts energy prices- rises in the price of gas and electricity and a very edgy oil market.

At the same time we have noteworthy developments in the wider SE European area, especially in the Balkans, as efforts to decarbonise the energy system gather pace and as several countries in the West Balkans are making concerted efforts to fully apply the European Aquis in their bid for accession to the EU.

The issue of introducing further clean energy technologies in conjunction with the need to improve energy security has acquired a new urgency and a number of countries are actively examining nuclear power as a viable option. With Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Croatia/Slovenia and lately Turkey being fully involved in new programmes. Energy Efficiency and Renewables remain areas of prime concern as, despite recent obstacles, as they attract continuing investment.

We have a very rich and challenging conference programme ahead of us as in the course of one and a half day we shall attempt to examine most of the facets of the current energy scene. But we are fortunate to have among us some top experts and analysts with deep knowledge and an equal commitment to their work, who will enlighten us on the issues involved and through an active debate we shall attempt to see through the mist that normally surrounds energy matters of some importance, especially in our part of the world.

In this first opening session we have the pleasure of welcoming our past Chairman Dr. John Desypris, also one of the founders of the Institute and John Roberts, well known energy security specialist, Senior Research Fellow of IENE and a great friend of our Institute.

Then we shall welcome Mr. Artur Lorkowski, the Director of the Energy Community Secretariat and immediately after Mrs. Alexandra Sdoukou, Greece's Deputy Minister of Environment and Energy.

I would now like to ask John Roberts, who also happens to be the Rapporteur of this year's Energy Dialogue, to say a few introductory words.