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PRESS RELEASE

**WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 2018 INVESTING IN A GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR THE USE OF PLASTICS
AIMING TO PROTECT THE PLANET AND THE CITIZENS AND THE GROWTH OF INDUSTRY AT THE SAME
TIME**

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The Association of Greek Chemists (AGC), as a public legal entity, is the official State Consultant in Chemistry matters. AGC believes that the protection of the environment can only be achieved if citizens change their attitude in everyday matters and legal framework is implemented by the State. The effective protection of the Environment is not just a matter of an annual celebration every 5th of June, thus AGC has submitted proposals with the perspective of a sustainable economic development while protecting the environment.

The above estimation does not change the fact that World Environment Day is a first chance opportunity for global information and encourages actions to protect the environment. Since 1972, when the UN General Assembly established the 5th of June as a day dedicated to the protection of the environment, more than 100 countries celebrate this day displaying the environmental issues to a public platform. Every year, official World Environment Day celebrations take place in a different host country to highlight the particular environmental challenges it faces and to support the effort to tackle them. This year's official host country is India which is a country with major environmental problems. Furthermore, World Environment Day 2018 focuses on combating environmental pollution of seas and oceans by plastics.

The United Nations and the European Union urge all governments, industries and the world's population to investigate and implement viable alternatives to reduce urgently the production and use of disposable plastic that pollutes the oceans that damages the marine life and threatens human health.

According to various Institutes, there are 500 times more pieces of micro-plastic at sea than there are stars in our galaxy. More than eight million tons of plastic enter the oceans every year. It is estimated that by 2050 there will be more plastic than fish and that 99% of all seabirds on the planet will have consumed plastics. It is estimated that the sea now contains about 51 trillion particles of microplastics, with the largest quantities being gathered in the Arctic Sea.

In the Mediterranean Sea, a closed sea with a sensitive ecosystem, recent surveys prove that it is considered as a region of large accumulation of plastic remains. The average density of plastic found was 1 piece per 4 square meters a value that makes the Mediterranean Sea comparable to the high-density plastic zones in oceans. The impact of pollution from plastics on marine and human life is expected to be particularly serious, given the fact that the wealth – in terms of biology - and the concentration of economic activities in the Mediterranean Sea are quite high.

In Greece, the situation is particularly burdened, at least according to Greenpeace figures, since the Aegean is also receiving pollution from the Black Sea. From the beaches where Loggerhead sea turtles live, in Zakynthos, to the most remote beaches of Heraklion and Mykonos, and from the bottom of the Caldera to Santorini to the open sea, plastics are everywhere. Research conducted by the HELLENIC CENTRE FOR MARINE RESEARCH (HCMR) has highlighted the problem and gave some very impressive findings, demonstrating the seriousness of the problem. In particular, 84 garbage of plastic disposable items were recorded in 317 meters deep in Caldera of Santorini, 514 plastic objects were counted in inaccessible beaches of Iraklia, Cyclades, and 821 plastic objects between Armenistis and Avlemonas in Mykonos. Plastic bags have been found in the stomachs of seabirds and whales.

The European Union announced, last March in Strasbourg, a European strategy for plastics with a horizon of 2030 aiming to protect the planet, defend citizens and at the same time strengthen the industry by transforming the economic model into a circular economy model.

The AGC strongly supports policies aimed at reducing plastics consumption, re-use and recycling, and believes that a major change in citizens' everyday practices can be achieved through concerted actions to inform the public and the enterprises.

In this context, AGC has actively participated in the life debag program and has held informative events on Circular Economy. Moreover, on 5th June 2018, World Environment Day, in collaboration with SYVIPYS, the Association of the Greek Manufacturers of Packaging & Materials, introduces the theme "Creating Green Values with Packaged Greek Products" in order to offer expertise on the transformation and evolution of packaging materials.

AGC believes that supporting measures by the Government, as well as voluntary agreements with large chain stores, can directly influence and help in to behavior change of the citizens at national level. As the Scientific Institute for Greek Chemists, AGC is well aware that the protection of the environment and the application of sustainable development rules is a dynamic process; requires focusing on new challenges and emerging risks and a multidisciplinary approach by different institutes by monitoring, updating and upgrading the environmental legislative framework.

The purpose of AGC is to contribute to a future with respect for mankind and all forms of life, the strengthening of the economy in the direction of sustainable development and the proper coexistence of man-made activities with the natural environment. In this context, its interventions and activities are planned.