

Brussels 25.02.1997

Dear Mr Commissioner,

*On behalf of the Greek delegation, I would like to thank you for that meeting and the briefing.*

*We are 14 members of the Greek Parliament specialized in the field of Agriculture, as members of the "New Demokratia" party Parliamentary Committee of Agriculture. And also some prominent Greek farmers coming from various parts of the Greek land.*

*We all are anxious about the present and the future of the agricultural sector in Greece.*

*As you know the active rural population in Greece is very high (approximately 21%), comparing with the relevant level of the European Union.*

*That is why we all attribute so much importance to agriculture in Greece.*

*And the increasing level of unemployment in Greece is a very pessimistic fact.*

*From now on the opportunities for the farmers and especially the young farmers to stay and live in the country side are worthless and in any case insufficient.*

*We all are aware of the trend to cut down the expenditures of the European Union towards the sector of Agriculture, in favour of other sectors of the economy.*

*And we all estimate the international pressure against the subsidies.*

*But on the other hand it is necessary for the European Union to understand and recognize the specialized situation and the particularities that characterize the current reality, as regards the sector in Greece.*

*First of all the Greek economy is unable to promote and offer new alternatives of employment.*

*So the reasons of the necessary support of the Greek farmers are economic, as well as social.*

*As you know, Mr. Commissioner, the main problems of our agriculture, among others, relate to the structural defects, to the low level of investments, to the lack of relevant information, and the low level of productivity.*

*In addition to that, the system of movement and disposition of the products to the markets is problematic and inadequate.*

*The more serious problems face certain products as:*

*cotton, tobacco, olive oil, cereal, cow milk, rice, fruits and vegetables.*

*So Greece, as the poorest country of the European Union seeks special treatment.*

*It is necessary, during the discussions and negotiations about the new enlargement of the E.U. as to accept new members-states or about the cooperation with certain Mediterranean States, to prevail the aspect that the member state of the E.U., that is Greece, must maintain at least the current level of community support in order to stabilize the level and standard of living and to avoid social tension in Greece, in the framework of cohesion.*

*You all are aware of the difficulties of the Greek economy to adjust with the new priorities. The new data, the new perspectives.*

*I think that the latest incidents in Greece with the blockade of motorways by farmers for so long, persuade about the extent and the strength of our rural problem.*

*And again the sector of agriculture influences a lot and decisively the development that matter the whole economy,*

*We hope that you, Mr. Commissioner, with the deep and long run knowledge and successful service in the field of agriculture will contribute decisively through the European Institutions measures to the solution of the main problems that Greek agriculture faces today.*