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Press Release

The European Network of Scientists for Social and Environmental Responsibility, at its 7th annual assembly in Athens this year, has expressed its sympathy and solidarity with the victims of the recent disastrous floods in Mandras, Attika. Participating scientists at the meeting, from many European nations, discussed this event and the factors increasing its severity, as well as similar ones elsewhere in the world. It released the following statement:

Greece is one of the areas worst affected by climate-change effects. It is well-documented that these include an increase in extreme weather events like severe heat and drought followed by devastating floods. Greece has just suffered from such a series of events: this historic flood followed last year's extreme heat with temperatures exceeding 40°C and drought. This has not only cost the lives of 20 people but has destroyed and disrupted the livelihoods of many more.

An event like the recent Greek flood cannot be called a 'natural disaster' without recognising the man-made causes exacerbating such events. For example, science provides ample evidence challenging the dominant model for industrial agriculture based on chemical inputs and monoculture. Adverse effects of this range from soil erosion aggravating floods, to spreading pesticides causing endocrine disruption and cancer. These adverse effects were first reported by independent scientists but later acknowledged by official scientific bodies.

These and other aspects are addressed at the workshop on 'Agriculture and Health - The Greening of Europe and opportunities for Greece' jointly organized in Athens by the

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Mariolopoulos Kanaginis Foundation for Environmental Sciences and the European Network of Scientists for Social and Environmental Responsibility (ENSSER) on the 24th November.

"ENSSER is a multidisciplinary non-profit organisation of scientists working for the public good in times when science has largely been captured by private interests" says Angelika Hilbeck, co-founder and board member of ENSSER. ENSSER was founded in 2009 and its role is to generate and highlight properly independent scientific evidence to inform policy making and put pressure on regulatory agencies to abandon regulations that foster and tolerate contamination of the environment and our bodies.

ENSSER provides the EU and its member states with scientific evidence which highlights their responsibility to devise policies that mitigate climate change, and reward land-use practices, including agricultural policies that: restore soil-quality, such as agroecology; produce pesticide-free, healthy food; protect the integrity of remaining ecosystems, like the ecological restoration of watersheds; and increase resilience to extreme weather events. In this, Greece has the outstanding opportunity to set policies for future ecological agro-food systems as it has not yet fully industrialized its agriculture to the same degree as elsewhere in the EU; and a key EU-wide support for this lies in the inclusion of sustainable agricultural policies in the forthcoming reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.

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