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World Environment Day at the EPLO

World Environment Day (WED) is celebrated annually on the 5th of June and encourages awareness and action for protecting the environment.

This year's World Environment Day campaign focuses on land restoration, desertification and drought resilience under the slogan "Our land. Our future. We are #GenerationRestoration."

The focus refers to key impacts of the climate crisis that need to be urgently addressed as they are related to water scarcity, wildfires, and floods.

The EU has always been a pioneer in protecting the environment and combatting climate change.

A key milestone related to this year's Environment Day is the Soil Monitoring and Resilience Directive which constitutes best practice to be followed across the globe.

On 10th April 2024, the European Parliament adopted its position on the Soil Monitoring and Resilience Directive, intending to have all EU soils healthy by 2050. The Belgian Presidency aims to reach a common position on this proposal at the Environment Council on 17 June 2024.

The world's land plays a key role in the climate system as an essential carbon sink that regulates the planet's temperature and absorbs its carbon emissions.

Healthy soil underpins food and fiber production. Soil carbon is highly complex, and depending on how land is managed, it can be a significant source or sink for greenhouse gases.

Thus the EU Directive plays a critical role in that respect.

The environment has no borders and thus environmental pollution is "traveling" through air pollution, river pollution, and sea pollution. Environmental degradation is also fuelling the climate crisis as it increases emissions of greenhouse gases that lead to the increase of the temperature of the planet.

Green infrastructures and ecosystem services are key, not only for the protection of the environment but also for climate mitigation and resilience. Biodiversity is threatened worldwide and it is important to halt biodiversity loss and to protect it.

Last but not least it is important in every environment day to stress the importance of the circular economy as the new economic model - contrary to the still prevailing linear one - which will reduce the environmental, energy and climate footprint, boost energy transition and ensure carbon neutrality by 2050.

All the above priorities are promoted in terms of capacity and institutional building by the EPLO Institute on Circular Economy and Climate www1.eplo.int

On 22 May the EPLO inaugurated its Offices in Rome at the Palazzo Altemps, in the presence of the



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President of the Italian Republic Mr. Sergio Mattarella, the President of the Hellenic Republic Mrs Katerina N. Sakellariopoulou, and the President of the Bulgarian Republic Mr. Rumen Radev and of a prominent international audience. The event was live-streamed <https://www.youtube.com/live/vwpN9NGOsLY?si=n3nDtrTV08rGrA0t>

The inauguration ceremony was followed by a conference composed of four panels that related to the key challenges our states are facing:

Climate, migration, health and cultural heritage.

The Circular Economy and Climate Institute of the EPLO has been actively involved in the climate panel. The risks of increased temperatures in Europe and in the Mediterranean have been highlighted and the need for stronger mitigation commitments through reinforced NDCs, as well as adaptation and resilience plans at all levels tailored to the specificities of each region and municipality. The links between the climate crisis, climate-related mortality and potential pandemics were raised and the climate migration problem already happening. Last but not least, the conference has highlighted the threats to our tangible and intangible culture and natural heritage because of the climate crisis.

The EPLO Institute on Circular Economy and Climate underscores the importance of the environment day, a key day, for our Planet, its climate and the quality of our life. It raises awareness about its importance for future generations and also shares good practices regarding knowledge base, training, and new governance models needed to address the above key challenges.

Happy and Conscious World Environment Day!

From the circular economy and climate Institute of the EPLO.

George Kremlis, Director of the Institute &

Fay Selimi, Deputy Director of the Institute.