

Hopes and expectations

The new Pasok government comes into office at a critical time in the evolution of this country. While the pre-election agenda seems to have been dominated with the financial crisis, another more pressing crisis, that of the environment, must also be addressed at the same time.

On this topic, we are hopeful that the long overdue ministry of environment will be the first obvious step forward. It won't be enough on its own. Mr Papandreou and his new government must be ready and willing to confront and change the unsustainable development paradigm of Greece. The first 100 days will be a test of Pasok's commitment to sustainability. Just a few of the bold moves we expect include: a public commitment in favour of 40 percent emission reductions at Copenhagen, formulation of an effective forest fire policy, cancellation of the highly detrimental spatial plan for tourism and the scandalous diversion of the Acheloos River, formulation of an effective biodiversity strategy. The list goes on. We stand ready to assist and challenge wherever necessary.

George Tsarbopoulos

Director of the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) in Athens

For UNHCR, the change of government is an opportunity to refresh the dialogue and lay on the table several issues related with refugees and asylum that need a more comprehensive approach and substantial improvements. In the context of increased mixed migration flows, the new government will be faced with the challenge to strike a balance between border management and protection for people fleeing war, violence or persecution.

Immediate changes are required as regards the quality of the asylum procedure and decision-making, leading to a gradual transfer of the respective responsibilities from the police to a new political body. Other improvements should include adequate reception conditions for asylum seekers, special measures for unaccompanied children and changes in respect with detention policies.

Yiannis Pantazopoulos

President of the World Hellenic

Inter-Parliamentary Association

As WHIA members and ambassadors of Hellenism, we are looking forward to an excellent communication and cooperation with the new government and the new parliament. We are confident that we can have fruitful discussions with the members of the new government and also with all the political parties in the new parliament, on mutual issues such as the return of the Parthenon sculptures, Cyprus and many other issues regarding Greeks of the diaspora and the progress of Hellenism worldwide.

Antonis Diamataris

Publisher/editor, Ethnikos Kyrikas/National Herald

As always, we were watching, waiting and reporting on the results. After a year of financial duress, scandals, riots and fires, things did not augur well for the party in power. Kostas Karamanlis took a big risk in calling for early elections - and the results came out against his calculations. Personally, I was disappointed. As our reporters gauged the reactions of the Greek community in Brooklyn, Staten Island and Astoria, the reactions were mixed, and of course depended on party affiliation. But many Pasok supporters only cautiously celebrated because they are waiting to see and many of them are experiencing the effects of the recession in their own lives.

Marina Lambraki Plaka

National Gallery director
We want the process for the expansion of the National Gallery to continue without any hurdles. For some time now we have also been asking for the rights to a deserted midwar building in Goudi, which served as the army's bakery. The idea is to turn it into a collectors' museum and gather there collections that arts patrons want to offer to the state. Prompt programming on the part of the state as far as the financing of cultural

projects is concerned is also an issue. Finally, our wish is that the new government pays more attention to culture, which should be the Greek state's focus of interest

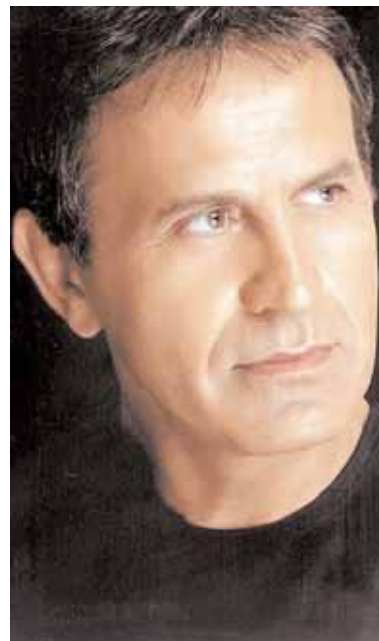
Yvette Jarvis

Immigration advisor to the mayor of Athens

I'm ecstatic that George is prime minister. I really do believe that it's his time. And we're ready for him. The immigrant community is very hopeful. We're praying for his success. We are waiting for something better. Everybody needed a change. Papandreou is someone who is not like the fist-pounding, loud politician we are accustomed to in Greece. He comes on as a much smoother-style politician. He has an incredible background. I'm very excited about his new cabinet. He has shown that he has respect for competent women. It's very encouraging.

George Dalaras

Singer



To begin with, the new government has to live up to the citizens' expectations, of both those who voted and those who, deep down, haven't given up hope. The country is currently at the nadir in every respect. I expect the government to give back to politics its true meaning and to restore Greece's dignity on the international front while safeguard-



ing national interests. I demand and I expect transparency everywhere: in the hiring of civil servants, in state procurements and in public contracts. The financial issue is so intense that it allows for no digression from the above.

Finally, I expect from the government a different political approach regarding the just distribution of the crisis' burdens. Low incomes have to be promptly bolstered so that the feeling of social injustice, which gives rise to tensions, can settle down. Tomorrow may be too late

Alexandros Myrat

Camerata principal conductor

I'm afraid, even though I wish I was wrong, that Greek people can expect nothing from any new government as long as they don't change their behaviour. They expect something to change from outside first, but in their majority they allow themselves to be subject to addictions on a daily basis. Addicted to corruption, tax evasion and easy profit at the expense of others, they find solutions to their own problems while being indifferent to repercussions on society. Corroded state mechanisms sink through the lack of productivity and poison daily life, mired as they are in a cul-de-sac of inefficiency. It's always someone else's fault. Childish consumer behaviour and selfishness reign, and so do arbitrary actions on land and "on air" (TV channels), and the lack of punishment for all that weighs heavily...When I first arrived in Athens I was insulted by big posters bearing the slogan "Do You Love Greece? Prove it" which reminded me of "the spitting is forbidden" sign in the buses of my childhood.

I still await this proof and I think I have it, judging by the gradual aesthetic and natural destruction of a country without a forest registry. And I'm fed up. I'm fed up with hearing that "this is Greece".

But there is another Greece which can no longer put up with the situation it's subject to. This Greece deserves a bet-

ter fate.

Gravediggers of every culture, bear this in mind: Those who hope die last.

Anna Kokkinou

Theatre actress and director



Because Greek people are used to care only about their own interests, it will be a big step forward to come to realise that the raising of the public's cultural niveau is in their best interest. The state has to treat us with dignity. If only everything could be at the service of the citizen, as it is in Berlin. As is, I feel pain and bitterness.

Yiorgos Pyrpassopoulos

Actor

The expectations never change for any government. The demands as I see them for the time being remain the same. These include: fighting corruption, improving the legal system? more specifically justice, solutions for the health and insurance departments, no more cronyism, immediate protection of the environment, taking advantage of renewable sources, minimising debt and, most importantly, improving the education system. Other than that, the TV channels should be obligated to follow the law by giving the agreed percentage of money to the film industry. Also, supporting the bicycle as a transportation solution. These things can't change immediately, but strong efforts to form a solid foundation are imperative. Do I ask for too much? Some people might say yes, but I say that's only the beginning