



**Joint letter to the Greek Prime Minister from environmental organizations, scientific experts, and representatives of the local community of the Ionian for the seismic exploration activities in the Hellenic Trench**

The world is facing an uncertain and unstable political crisis. Nevertheless, there is also little doubt that climate change and continued loss of biodiversity remain two of the most pressing issues facing current and future generations.

On the occasion of the recent stranding incidents of Cuvier’s beaked whales off the coasts of Corfu Island, 60 environmental organizations, scientific experts, and representatives of the local community of the Ionian, joined forces and issued a letter to the Prime Minister and the responsible Ministries. In the letter the signatories expressed their deep concerns over the seismic exploration activities in the Hellenic Trench, especially the threats they pose to marine species.

The Hellenic Trench is a critical habitat for protected and endangered species of cetaceans and noise pollution caused by seismic surveys poses severe risks to marine mammals, in some cases even leading to death, as well as to other marine species.

Unfortunately, the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the seismic surveys in the Ionian Sea was considered insufficient by both specialized scientists and environmental organizations. More so, there was no proper and thorough Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) conducted prior to the official approval of the seismic activities, which is in stark contrast to Greece’s obligation under European law and international commitments.

The above-mentioned seismic surveys carried out in the Hellenic Trench do not comply at all with the provisions of conventions that have been ratified by Greece, aim at the preservation of important habitats and the protection of vulnerable species. At the same time, the execution of seismic survey operations diverts Greece from achieving a Good Environmental Status by reducing the effects of noise pollution (Descriptor 11 of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive).

The availability of energy at national level is undergoing a state of high political sensitivity, but seismic surveys conducted in the course of new oil and gas exploration that can only be exploited after a decade, are in stark contrast with the urgent and decisive action needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions if we want to keep the world on a 1.5°C pathway, as agreed by the Paris Agreement and totally ignore the Report of the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).