

**Introduction address**  
**of the**  
**President of the Speleological, Society of Greece Professor**  
**M.D. Dermitzakis**

As a representative of the organizing committee I welcome the honourable participating members, who, by their presence here today show their grate interest in the speleological researches and their love and their appreciation for the Hellenic Speleological Society. It is evidently remarkable that despite the grate difficulties, the Speleological research has shown an extremely rapid development during the last years.

Since the International Symposium in 1971 another four International Congress and Meetings took place, characterised by a gradually increased progress.

The importance of the present Congress is supported also by the fact that almost 100 papers dealing with very interesting up today problems in Speleology, are presented in the program.

It is encouraging to see here except of the old guard of Speleology, new and young researches who by their paper are giving a new breath to the Speleological investigation.

Speleology is that branch of the geosciences which we could call natural architecture or natural decoration. Nature as the supprime architect gives the right balance between rich and simple, robust and graceful, hiding at the same time its creation from evil eye. In this, the cave is transformed since its creation to a sacred place where nature way adds despite time, its finishing touch.

Man since his origin found refuge into the caves in order to protect himself from the physical phenomena and the wild beasts. By this process he began to discover nature's creations -the caves- and considered them as God's home.

As Greece is mostly covered by calcareous sediments -almost of 55% of its surface- rocks which are easily erroded and chemically affected, it's included among the most important countries concerning karstic formations.

Many of the Greek caves have contributed the study of the ancient Greek civilization and modern Greek history revealing some of its glorious moments.

Greek Mythology has located Zeus genesis in Dikteio Andro, his breeding in Ideon and his burial in the Minoan Iyto, all Cretan caves.

Many of Greek Pantheon Gods and half gods were worshipped in caves.

The founder of the Greek Speleological Society G. Petrochilos, his wife Anna and coworkers in 15 November 1950 had a vision of creating an organization for the detailed investigation, mapping and study of Greek caves both from scientific and touristic view. During the 44 years of action of the Society, an important work has been presented despite all the difficulties. Today, following on their steps we continue their work covering an important part of Geosciences. All these years the

Speleological Society organized, seminars to educate research teams, International Congresses and Meetings. Today there is a record of 7500 caves which have been investigated and mapped. Many of these are touristically developed being visited by thousands of visitors giving by this way an economic advantage, to some under development Greek areas.

In the area of Paleontology the Speleological Society of Greece has impressive results in the study of paleobiology, paleogeography, faunal migration and tectonic evolution of Ageis in particular and Eastern Mediterranean in general.

The Speleological Society of Greece is also publishing the Bulletin of Speleological Society. So it is important that the State will support the S.S.G. and the cave development.

At this point, I have to refer to the State's assistance in our work. It is a feeling of bitterness which is unavoidable. The Greek tourism organization has given us only a very small assistance and the Ministry of Civilization and Culture none at all. We are hoping in a future change of mind.

At this moment we would like to turn our thoughts to those absent today, to those that due to any cause could not participate to this Meeting.

We are deeply moved by the presence of many foreign colleagues who have devoted their lives in the Speleological research as well as our Cypriot colleagues who are suffering today what Crete has suffered in the past.

We must mention that this Congress would not have been realised in the following three factors did not exist:

-the material one by the European Union and the sponsors referred in the program

-the moral one by the assistance of the Society members and Athens University and

- the scientific one by the presentation of papers.

Concerning the structure of this Meeting collaborators and I have tried to divide the Congress into units representing modern research problems.

Finally I would like to remind you what the father of the Speleological science frenchman Edward-Alfred Martel, who died in 1938 in the age of 79, has written in one of his papers: «Il se retrouvait se manches».

Let us roll up our sleeves then.