



REPUBLIC OF SERBIA  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



ADRIATIC AND IONIAN INITIATIVE  
CHAIRMANSHIP OF SERBIA  
JUNE 2011 – MAY 2012

**BELGRADE DECLARATION**  
of the XIV Adriatic and Ionian Council  
Belgrade, 30<sup>th</sup> April 2012

**We, the representatives of the Governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia**

**Recalling** the Ancona Declaration of 2000 and the Declarations of the Adriatic and Ionian Councils from 2001 to 2011;

**Recognizing** the importance of regional cooperation as means of fostering political and economic stability of the area;

**Reaffirming** that the future of South-East Europe lies within the European Union in line with the EU Declaration on enlargement signed in Thessaloniki in 2003 and reaffirmed in the European Council Conclusions in 2006;

**Appreciating** the significant progress and important steps that have been made in the European integration process of the AII Participating States;

**Emphasising** that a future EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Macro-Region will serve the goal of increasing prosperity, security and peace for the peoples living in the area;

**Welcoming** the activities and efforts already made by the AII Participating Member States in cooperation with the European Commission concerning the EU Strategy;

**Commending** the successful activities carried out during the Serbian Presidency;

HAVE AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

1. Reaffirm the strong commitment of the SEE Countries to European Union enlargement process as a strategic goal of the AII Participating States in accordance with the Ancona Declaration 2000. Welcome the readiness of the European Union to continue its enlargement policy which is an important objective for both the region and Europe, in accordance with established criteria;

2. Welcome the progress achieved by the AII Participating States in the European integration process as was reaffirmed in the European Council Conclusions of 9 December 2011 and 1 March 2012. In particular:
  - Welcome Croatia's future accession to the EU in July 2013, as set by the Conclusions of the European Council in December 2011;
  - Commend the progress made by Montenegro expecting that the accession negotiations shall be opened in June 2012;
  - Express satisfaction with the progress made by Serbia witnessed by receiving the candidate status and hoping that the date for commencing the accession negotiations will be defined in the framework of the current year;
  - Expect that Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to make progress and gain the Candidate status soon;
3. Reaffirm support to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Macro-Region, previously expressed in the Ancona Declaration on the support to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region of 5<sup>th</sup> May 2010 and Brussels Declaration of the Adriatic Ionian Council of 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2011;
4. Welcome in particular:
  - The Conclusions of the European Council of 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2011 inviting Member States "to continue work in cooperation with the Commission on possible future macro-regional strategies, in particular as regards the Adriatic and Ionian region";
  - The unanimous approval by the Assembly of the Committee of the Regions of the opinion on "Territorial cooperation in the Mediterranean through the Adriatic Ionian Macro-Region" adopted on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2011;
  - The Conclusions of the European Council on the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) of December 2011 expressing support to the "ongoing work of Adriatic and Ionian Member States to enhance maritime cooperation with non-EU neighbors in the area within the framework of a macro regional strategy";
5. Confirm full commitment to continue the cooperation with the European Commission in further activities concerning the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region. Invite the AII Participating States to play an active role, engage public and private sectors and encourage stakeholders, especially regional and local authorities, companies, universities and civil society for the preparation of the EU Strategy;
6. Reiterate full support to the EU Member States of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative, in close coordination with all other AII Participating States, in promoting the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region at the European Council;
7. Express hope that the European Council will give a mandate to the European Commission by 2012 to start the elaboration of the Strategy and its Action Plan;
8. Invite the AII Presidency, assisted by the Permanent Secretariat, to continue participating actively in "contact points" meetings with the European Commission and stakeholders' workshops for the development of the EU Strategy;
9. Emphasize the commitment of AII Participating States, especially maritime ones, to work on a maritime strand for the Adriatic and Ionian area, as a first step towards a wider macro-regional strategy aimed at identifying common priorities and way forward for the sustainable growth of maritime activities in the area;

10. Reaffirm, to this effect, that the AII Participating States will set out a joint vision based on the engagement with national stakeholders and on the work carried out within the Expert Group already established with the support of the European Commission;
11. Emphasize the importance of intergovernmental cooperation, including the parliamentary dimension, in enhancing regional cooperation and supporting stability, democracy and development in the Adriatic Ionian area;
12. Take note with satisfaction of the meeting of the Speakers of the Parliaments that took place in Belgrade on April 26<sup>th</sup> with the aim of strengthening cooperation among AII Participating States and underline the significance of future contacts among representatives of the Parliaments;
13. Welcome the start-up of the “Regional Cooperation Programme” for the co-financing of trans-border cooperation projects for the priority areas defined by the AII Cooperation Protocols signed in 2010 on Small and Medium Enterprises, Tourism and Rural Development, as well as for programmes aimed at fostering the enhancement of a future Adriatic and Ionian Macro-Region;
14. Acknowledge the work done within the meetings and round tables on small and medium enterprises, maritime cooperation, environmental protection and rural development;
15. Emphasize the importance of regular contacts with other organizations and initiatives active in our broader region, such as the Central European Initiative, the South East European Cooperation Process, the Regional Cooperation Council, the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Council of the Baltic Sea States, in order to exchange information on activities and best practices, explore possible common grounds for concerted action and avoid duplication;
16. Take note of the progress of our cooperation with other Fora of the Adriatic and Ionian area as the Forum of Chambers of Commerce, the Forum of Cities and Towns and the UNIADRION network of Universities;
17. Acknowledge with satisfaction the approval by the CSO of the annual report of activities of the AII Permanent Secretariat;
18. Thank Serbia for a successful Presidency and organization of the XIV Adriatic and Ionian Council;
19. Entrust Slovenia with the incoming AII Presidency from 1 June 2012.