



PERMANENT SECRETARIAT

ADRIATIC AND IONIAN COUNCIL / EUSAIR MINISTERIAL MEETING

Budva, 8 May 2019

SPEECH OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE AII, Amb. Giovanni Castellaneta

- Dear President, Ministers, Excellencies... it is a pleasure for me to be here today in Budva, a town rich in culture and history, which embodies our common heritage and identity, as Secretary General of your Adriatic and Ionian Initiative, for the fourth joint “Adriatic and Ionian Council / EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting”.
- Last year was challenging for regional cooperation in the Adriatic and Ionian region, both in terms of intergovernmental cooperation within the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (AII) and in terms of cooperation under the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR);
- This new form of cooperation, together with the traditional intergovernmental cooperation in this area – taking place in the framework of the AII - is crucial in bringing the two shores of the sea closer to each other, both in terms of institutions and people. This is a significant training camp for those Western Balkans Countries that are approaching the EU membership. Cooperation in this context is beneficial as it facilitates their accession process and fosters a democratic, social and economic development process in Europe.
- In this regard, I am convinced that the AII and its Permanent Secretariat will continue to be an essential tool for fostering regional cooperation by further enhancing policy dialogue and cooperation among the now ten AII Participating Countries. We will continue to support the European integration aspirations of the Western Balkan countries.
- As far as our activities are concerned, the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative, as well as its Permanent Secretariat, have completed the process of fine-tuning our activities and our priorities in order to make them closer to those ones of EUSAIR. This process has taken much efforts and time, but it was necessary to put in place all the required tools, which are now ready to use for the benefit of the Adriatic and Ionian region;
- During the next Serbian Chairmanship we need to foster a more active interaction between RTs and TSGs and to achieve a full synchronization between the two exercises.



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- During these years we have been able to carve out our role as sponsor of the Adriatic and Ionian civil society and stakeholders and we believe that only through their full involvement and participation into the macroregional process the Strategy can make a qualitative leap forward;
- I am therefore very pleased to see that this year the 4th EUSAIR Forum has a double hat and is taking place jointly with the 2nd Annual Conference of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce, Cities and Universities.
- The All Round Tables are now an instrument at disposal of Presidencies in order to make cooperation more effective at the grass root level. We are constantly in touch with the Adriatic and Ionian Fora, also through the AI-NURECC Initiative, and we can witness that there is enthusiasm around the opportunities that the EUSAIR Strategy may offer.
- The EUSAIR Stakeholders Platform, which is now operational, is one of the key tools, together with All Round Tables that may help in this endeavour.
- The Adriatic and Ionian civil societies are vibrant and have been cooperating since many years already, but this process needs to be further supported in order to step up the level of cooperation on macroregional projects that are finally able to increase the pace of growth and development in the region, to contribute to solving macroregional problems and to benefit from the opportunities underlying in this area. I am convinced that what is emerging from the Budva Declaration and the follow-up of paragraph 6 of the Catania Declaration are going in the right direction and could produce a qualitative step forward.
- I personally believe that we should be able to solve some of the difficulties we have encountered since the launch of the Strategy and that have been also mentioned by previous Ministerial Declarations, such as enhancing effective ownership of the strategy, securing sufficient resources and competent staff, as well as improving communication.
- I would like to mention the important developments taking place in the framework of the Parliamentary Dimension of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative. Parliaments are becoming more and more interested in the activities of the AI and the EUSAIR and are eager to contribute to regional cooperation in the Region. The Presidents of the Parliaments of the AI met last 18-19 of April here in Budva and expressed their wish to increase their role in regional cooperation in the Adriatic and Ionian region also through a strengthened relationship with the intergovernmental side and with the AI PS. We will therefore keep Parliaments updated on AI and EUSAIR activities and timely answering to their requests of information and support.



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- We are very happy to have from now a new member in our community. Therefore, I wish to congratulate the Republic of San Marino for its accession to the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative. I am utterly sure that this new member will bring added value to the Initiative and give new impetus to regional cooperation. The Secretariat will be at disposal of the new Participating Country to provide any support and help it may need in order to make the accession as smooth as possible.

- Let me also mention that after the conclusion of this Council a Memorandum of Understanding between the All Permanent Secretariat and the Central European Initiative Executive Secretariat will be signed. Two regional organizations which clearly share the same objectives, namely to facilitate the integration process and to promote economic growth and prosperity in the region through concrete cooperation activities.

- I want to thank the Montenegrin Chairmanship for the work done during this year and particularly Ivan Ivanisevic and Jelena Burzan and their team for having established a friendly, fair and efficient cooperation with the Permanent Secretariat. The Montenegrin Chairmanship has further had the merit and the foresight to organize two *ad hoc* events, other than many Round Tables, to further strengthen regional cooperation in two new areas of paramount importance for the region, namely youth and anti-corruption, by organizing a Ministerial Conference on strengthening the regional and Adriatic-Ionian cross cooperation in the field of youth and a Regional Round Table on strengthening integrity in State authorities and electoral processes in All countries. I can assure you that the All Permanent Secretariat stands ready to cooperate with future Presidencies in order to contribute to any eventual follow-up of the meetings. Thank you also for the gift offered as a rotating symbol of the Presidency which will be transferred at the time of Chairmanship handover which will further help us to stay united;

- Let me finally wish all success to the incoming Serbian Chairmanship and to the Serbian Delegation which has always demonstrated its commitment toward our Initiative.