



PERMANENT SECRETARIAT

XVI CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS/SPEAKERS OF PARLIAMENTS OF THE ADRIATIC AND IONIAN INITIATIVE

Budva, 18-19 March 2019

II session: *Parliamentary bodies as an important resource for strengthening cooperation in priority areas of the All states*

Opening remarks by Ambassador Giovanni Castellaneta - All Secretary General

- Dear President Mr Ivan **Brajović**, Dear Members of the All Parliaments...
- First let me **thank the Montenegrin Chairmanship** and Mr. **Ivan Brajović, President of the Montenegrin Parliament** for the kind invitation and for organizing such a successful Conference, which brings the contribution of Parliaments to Regional Cooperation in the Adriatic and Ionian Region to a higher level.
Let me thank you also for the yesterday evening and for the popular and folk music that represents our cultural heritage and that often, better than words, serve as friendship and collaboration between peoples.
- We appreciate the choice of the topics, **tourism and culture**, that together with infrastructures, connectivity and historical identity are themes closely related to the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative.
- Let me thank also the members of the Montenegrin Government who are present with us today and especially my good friend **Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Darmanovic**.
- I would also like to greet the President of the Parliament of the **Republic of North Macedonia** for joining the All family. I am positive that North Macedonia will join soon the EUSAIR strategy, while for the time being it must be included in all activities at coordination and operational level as a permanent observer, until full membership is achieved.



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- Thanks also to Greece for the agreement that has solved the long-term name dispute that finally open EU perspective to North Macedonia.
- Let me also inform you that I am confident that the **Republic of San Marino** will join the AII during the annual AII/EUSAIR Forum here in Budva next May.
- I am pleased to be here in **Budva** as Secretary General of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative, a town rich in culture and history, which embodies our common heritage and identity.
A town on the shore of the Adriatic Sea that perfectly symbolize **the Adriatic as a common sea**, which bond people together.
As already stressed this morning it is only through successful regional cooperation that we can develop our **tourism sector and the protection of cultural heritage** as a key driver of sustainable, social and economic development and cohesion of our region.
- The **Parliamentary Dimension** is a fundamental asset for the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative and Regional Cooperation in the area.
- This is a conference of paramount importance since it sees us all gathered here, **improving dialogue and bonding between peoples.**
- A **stricter cooperation among Parliaments of the Region is highly desirable** and would give added value in the effort to upgrade regional cooperation and to make the AII and the EUSAIR instruments to get South Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans again at the heart of European policy, where they deserve to be.
- After the endorsement of the **EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region”(EUSAIR)** and its Action Plan in autumn 2014, Adriatic and Ionian Governments are working hard for meeting its stated objectives “to build a stable and prosperous area, to foster sustainable development and job creation while, at the same time, **supporting the candidate and potential candidate countries in their bid for accession in the European Union”;**



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- In this regard, I can assure you 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 nine AII Participating Countries. We will continue to support the **European integration aspirations of the Western Balkan countries**.

Let me in this regard congratulate with the Republic of Montenegro as a leading country and at the forefront in the process of EU accession.

- National Parliaments can play a decisive role in facilitating the implementation of the EUSAIR Strategy. You are the **closest link to citizens and to the electoral body** - the real targets and beneficiaries of every regional cooperation action in line with the subsidiarity principle, which is at the base of the EUSAIR.

This means that you have the power to decide that the EUSAIR becomes a priority for all our countries and to facilitate its implementation, making sure that the benefits become a reality.

- Besides national development Strategies, it is crucial to work on regional strategies like the EUSAIR, particularly because it focuses on **common challenges** that can only be tackled together for the benefit of our citizens.
- Being the AII-PS both an intergovernmental organization and a full member of the EUSAIR Governing Board, the AII Permanent Secretariat is in a privileged position to support the role of the Parliaments within the framework of the EUSAIR.
- The support of AII Parliaments is crucial in this moment. In fact, in a few weeks the fourth **EUSAIR Forum will take place here in Budva (6-8 May)** together with the Adriatic and Ionian Council (AII highest-level body gathering nine Ministers of Foreign Affairs).

It will be the annual EUSAIR most important event gathering stakeholders from all over the region (Representatives of Governments, local administrations, civil society, the business world, NGOs, Universities, Research Centers, etc.).

The Forum will be a great occasion to exchange experiences, to discuss about the result of the longstanding efforts by AII administrations to build a functioning



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multilevel governance that must now be able to produce valuable and concrete macroregional projects;

- Along with this event on the same occasion it will take place the **Joint Conference of the Fora of Civil Society** – Chambers of Commerce, Cities and Universities – highly supported by the Permanent Secretariat of the All.
The All has assumed the new role of “**Advocate of Civil Society Organizations**” within the macroregional process in the belief that without subsidiarity and without the active role of civil society in the EUSAIR implementation, the Strategy would be meaningless.
- To complete the picture the **Ministerial meeting on youth and sport** will be held soon, attended by the Ministers of Youth, to integrate the parliamentary dimension and that of Civil Society.
- Furthermore, during the EUSAIR Forum in Budva 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.
- Concluding, the All Permanent Secretariat has the ambition to support all the activities of the nine All government and parliamentary bodies, Presidency and technical committees.
- In this regard, the All-PS is ready to give new life and renew the commitment of being a contact point for **High Level Officials of the nine All Parliaments** in order to facilitate the flow of communication from the intergovernmental and the EUSAIR side to the Parliaments.
- I wish you a successful continuation and a fruitful day of work. THANK YOU