



CEI Ministers of Foreign Affairs Meeting

Trieste, 11-12 June 2019

- Dear Chairman, Ministers, Excellencies...
- I would like to thank you for the outstanding organization of this high level event and for the warm hospitality of yesterday evening;
- Let me first recall the vision and activity in favour of our region of former Foreign Minister, Gianni De Michelis, I had the honour to serve during the early stage of my diplomatic service.
- The Adriatic and Ionian Initiative and EUSAIR play a special role as Regional Organizations in the process of the European integration of its non-EU Member States as well as in promoting the sustainable development of all its Participating Countries;
- As you know, the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative Permanent Secretariat and the Central European Initiative CEI - Executive Secretariat signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** in the occasion of the Adriatic and Ionian Council, held in Budva on May 8th, for a shared action for our respective regions.
- The signature seals a **strong long-standing partnership and contributes to fostering regional cooperation and sustainable development**. The MoU is a step forward for a joint preparation and implementation of activities as well as an exchange of expertise and skills in project management in areas of common interest to the benefit of our citizens.
- In the meantime, the **Budva Declaration**, adopted in the framework of the Adriatic and Ionian Council/EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting approved the **enlargement of our Initiative to the Republic of San Marino**. All now counts ten Participating Country including the Republic of North Macedonia which has been admitted during the previous All Italian Chairmanship.
- In this regard I would like to congratulate Montenegro on a successful, dynamic and proactive Presidency just concluded. The **Budva Declaration** adopted by

the Ministers of Foreign Affairs **sends a strong message in terms of importance of EU enlargement policy.**

- Let me also wish all success to the **Republic of Serbia** that from June 2019 holds the Chairmanship of the All, which will likely focus on energy infrastructures and transport connectivity;
- The All as well as the “**EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region**” which is currently our main focus, clearly share the same objectives as the Central European Initiative, namely to **facilitate the integration process and to promote economic growth and prosperity** in the region through concrete cooperation activities;
- The All, which will turn 20 years old next year - born by the proposal of former President of the EU Commission, Romano Prodi, in 2000 - will continue to foster cooperation and synergies among our Participating Countries in topics which are the future of the Adriatic and Ionian Region, such as Blue Growth, Infrastructures and Connections, Sustainable Environment and Culture, but also anti-corruption, youth policies, and migration and the protection of unaccompanied children.
- I can assure you that the All and its Permanent Secretariat will act to continue to be an essential tool for fostering regional cooperation by further enhancing policy dialogue and cooperation.
Special attention will be also reserved to the promotion of European standards and values, basic preconditions for the full involvement and complete integration of the Western Balkans in the European Union.
We will support the EU perspective of the non-EU Member States, **thus representing an impetus to the enlargement and integration process.**
- It is clear that there is **room for synergies** and for exchanging information and experiences between our intergovernmental / multilateral initiatives, starting with a process of bottom-up involvement of representatives of **Civil Society (Municipalities, Universities, Chambers of Commerce)** that the All has always promoted; and that also emerged in the last CEI parliamentary meeting we have attended.

- Thank you again for the invitation to this meeting and for the perfect hospitality in Trieste, arranged by the Italian Government, regional and local authorities and the CEI Executive Secretariat and his Secretary General, my great friend, Roberto Antonione.