

# THE ATHENS DECLARATION

Adopted at the 4th Adriatic and Ionian Council  
(Athens, 22 May 2002)

## **We, the Members of the Adriatic and Ionian Council:**

- **Albania**, represented by General Secretary Eduard Sulo;
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, represented by Deputy Minister Milovan Blagojevic;
- **Croatia**, represented by Deputy Minister Vesna Cvjetkovic Kurelec;
- **Federal Republic of Yugoslavia**, represented by Assistant Federal Minister Radojko Bogojevic;
- **Greece**, represented by Deputy Minister Ioannis Magriotis;
- **Italy**, represented by Undersecretary of State Roberto Antonione;
- **Slovenia**, represented by State Secretary Iztok Simoniti;
- with participation of the **European Commission** represented by Adviser Per Vinther,

**Guided** by the principles of the Ancona Declaration of May 19-20, 2000 and the Split Declaration of 25 May 2001:

**Express** their satisfaction concerning the progress so far made in all the fields of the AII cooperation during the past two years.

**Underline** the importance of political dialogue, and of the strengthening of cooperation between the member states to promote democracy, market economy and the rule of law.

**Stress** the importance of closer cooperation between the National Parliaments of the member - states which reflects the concerns and aspirations of the people of the region in conformity with the principles of democracy.

**Recall** in particular their agreement in Ancona on the need for deeper involvement by the EU in the Adriatic and Ionian region and their invitation to the European Commission to play an active role in the AII cooperation through

complementary EC programmes, such as INTERREG III, CARDS, PHARE, MARCO POLO, FALCONE, ARGO, etc.

**Emphasize** the significance of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe as a key element in the regional cooperation.

**Emphasize** the importance of the Stabilization and Association Process of the EU for the member states of AII concerned.

**Encourage** the establishment of close contacts, coordination and interaction among regional organizations/initiatives such as BSEC, AII, CEI, SECI, SEECP, as well as the Stability Pact in an endeavor to minimize overlapping and increase the efficiency of regional cooperation.

**Emphasize** that for significant progress to be made on projects of common interest, there is an urgent need for adequate financial resources.

**Took note of the following results of the Greek Chairmanship:**

- The Joint Declaration of the Interior and Public Order Ministers on the Fight Against Terrorism.
- The draft Memorandum of Understanding on Shipping Policy Issues, promoting a free and fair competition environment- The agreed Protocol of Cooperation in setting up a network of SMEs Support Services in the framework of the AII.
- The establishment of networks on Culture, concerning the contemporary art, new technologies and the use of ancient theaters.

**Expressed** satisfaction concerning the reports of the Round Tables on Culture, Economy, Tourism and Small & Medium Enterprises, Education and Inter-University Cooperation, Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development, Fight against Organized Crime, Transport and Maritime Cooperation

In particular:

**Underlined** the need for a common approach to meet the challenges of globalization and welcomed the emphasis given on closer cooperation among Adriatic and Ionian member states, in order to preserve cultural and natural heritage also by encouraging research in these fields

**Recognized** the importance of fostering entrepreneurship and SME creation and development within the AII.

**Stressed** the crucial importance of the energy sector, especially electrical power and the growing significance of renewable energy sources and energy saving.

**Recognized** the importance of closer cooperation in developing all forms of tourism including athletic, cultural, nautical and religious tourism as well as eco-tourism

**Stressed** the need to encourage the universities of the region to develop common projects on the basis of our historical and cultural background for better cohesion and mutual understanding

**Underlined** the importance for the universities to promote quality equivalence in higher education and develop integrated curricula through the establishment of a common credit transfer system

**Encouraged** all member states to cooperate with each other in order to take profit from existing regional and sub-regional initiatives and projects in the field of environmental protection in the framework of the United Nations, the European Union and the Council of Europe

**Agreed** that there is a need to prepare a sub-regional Contingency Plan in case of accidental marine pollution, within the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan of UNEP

**Recommended** that all AII member states participate in the research physical oceanography forecasting project (ADRICOSM)

**Reaffirmed** their support for the Adriatic - Ionian motorway and agreed to intensify the work on its realization

**Underlined** the importance of cooperation between ports in the Adriatic and Ionian region for Cruise Ship Accommodation, the promotion of Short Sea Shipping policy objectives and the implementation of projects related to Short Sea Shipping

**Affirmed** their common will to collaborate in taking all the necessary measures concerning the Fight Against Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

**Emphasized** the importance of harmonizing national legislations with the acquis communautaire and of regional cooperation in order to achieve the set targets concerning the fight against organized crime

**Stressed** the necessity for closer cooperation in combating illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings.

**Agreed** that measures for the implementation and suppression of acts of terrorism against shipping deserve particular attention and request prompt action to be taken in accordance with the respective measures to be agreed within the IMO framework to ensure that worldwide mobilization against terrorism be effective in as short as possible time, without disturbing the facilitation of the international maritime trade and existing trade practices.

**Expressed** their appreciation for the participation of the experts from the member states at the Round Tables and support the implementation of the common projects contained in the Joint Statements of the Round Tables.

**Expressed** their gratitude to Greece for its contribution to the Initiative over the period of its Chairmanship and for organizing successfully the meeting of the Council, and entrust Italy with the next AII Chairmanship until May 2003.