

PORTOROŽ DECLARATION

Adopted at the 6th Adriatic and Ionian Council
Portorož, 25 May 2004

The Members of the Adriatic-Ionian Council:

Albania, represented by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Luan Hajdaraga,

Bosnia and Herzegovina, represented by Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Republic of Slovenia Mr Mladen Bosić

Croatia, represented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Miomir Čuić,

Greece, represented by the Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Alexandros Miliaresis,

Italy, represented by the State Undersecretary, Senator Alfredo Luigi Mantica,

Serbia and Montenegro, represented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro Dr Dragiša Burzan,

Slovenia, represented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Dimitrij Rupel,

European Commission, represented by Amb. Erwan Fouéré, Head of the Delegation of the European Commission in Slovenia.

Guided by the Ancona Declaration of 19 and 20 May 2000 and the principles expressed therein, the Split Declaration of 25 May 2001, the Athens Declaration of 22 May 2002, and the Bari Declaration of 13 May 2003;

Underline the significance of permanent political dialogue between the Member States to enhance the political and economic reforms to promote security and stability, the development of democracy and market economy, and to strengthen the rule of law in the AII Member States negotiating for the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA). The Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) provides the framework for this perspective, following the conclusions of the Thessaloniki European Council and the EU-Western Balkans Summit, in June 2003 and the provisions of the Thessaloniki

Agenda for the Western Balkans.

Express the belief that the process of EU enlargement should continue in future. In particular, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Greece, Italy and Slovenia will support the European approach of the AII Member States, which are not yet EU members as the European perspective is an important factor for the strengthening of the political and economic reforms under way in these countries.

Express satisfaction over the increasing all-round and enhanced cooperation between the AII Member States.

Underline the progress achieved in the Stabilisation and Association Process throughout the region.

Support the efforts of the Republic of Croatia to fully integrate into the EU, and in this respect welcome the positive Avis of the European Commission with the hope that the candidate status and the beginning of accession negotiations will follow in the immediate future.

Welcome the progress of the Republic of Albania in negotiations for the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU, and express the hope that the results achieved so far and the progress of the reforms will lead soon to the conclusion of the SAA.

Support the completion of the reform process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, required for an early conclusion of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. The Ministers congratulate Bosnia and Herzegovina for most successful chairmanship of the SEECP from April 2003 until April 2004.

Support Serbia and Montenegro to continue the efforts within Stabilisation and Association process.

Welcome Slovenia's recent accession to NATO and to the European Union, which contributes to the strengthening of security and stability in the region

and will have a positive impact on the cooperation within the AII.

Support an early accession to the Euro-Atlantic structures of all those countries in the region willing and able to join.

Express confidence that the upcoming NATO Istanbul Summit will send clear messages to Albania and Croatia with regard to the NATO Membership and extend invitation to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro, to join the Partnership for Peace Programme.

Call upon the international community to insist on the rapid removal of the consequences of ethnically-motivated violence in Kosovo, as well as the political leaders in Kosovo to ensure in close cooperation with UNMIK and KFOR the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244(1999), the earliest possible return of internally displaced persons, physical security and the full protection of the rights of each individual citizen in Kosovo.

Reaffirm the importance of cooperation among AII parliaments and welcome the meeting of the Presidents of the Parliaments of the AII Member States, which was held under Slovenian Presidency on 10 May 2004 in Portorož

Emphasise the opportunity that AII projects should utilise, whenever possible, the European Funds for Regional Development.

Express appreciation for the European Commission's programmes (such as INTERREG III A, CARDS, PHARE, MARCO POLO, AGIS, ARGO and other) relating to regional projects to further the economy of the Member States with the assistance of these programmes.

Welcome further progress in the process of coordination and project cooperation with and among the various regional initiatives in the area such as the Stability Pact (SP), the Central European Initiative (CEI), the South-East European Co-operation Process (SEECP), the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI), and the Danube

Cooperation Process (DCP).

Stress the need for speeding up the process of facilitation of the movement of people in the region and within Europe in full compliance and as a part of a comprehensive EU visa regime. Aware of the complexity of this process share the conviction of the necessity to explore all possibilities through appropriate arrangements respecting the existing EU commitments.

Express satisfaction over the results achieved during the Slovenian AII Presidency within the Round Tables on the Fight against Organised Crime; Economy, Tourism and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises; Education and Inter-University Cooperation; Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development; Transport and Maritime Cooperation; Culture, and support the implementation of joint projects stated in joint statements.

In particular:

Express readiness to enhance cooperation in the fight against organized crime, notably in the fields of information exchange, terrorism, illegal migration, production and trade in illicit drugs, trade in stolen vehicles, terrorism by coordinating and unifying standards that serve as a basis for the joint fight against organised crime in the Adriatic-Ionian region.

Underline the significance of project cooperation in the field of small and medium-sized enterprises as EU financial resources can be obtained through specific projects. Cooperation among SMEs through business and university incubators should be strengthened and more attention should be devoted to young entrepreneurs and new entrepreneurial ideas.

Emphasise exchange of knowledge and best practices in the field of tourism, which should be confirmed by the adoption of a declaration on cooperation in tourism.

Express the conviction that the forthcoming Olympic Games in Athens would offer a unique and excellent opportunity for the promotion of the tourist

resources of the whole AII region.

Note the need to expand and enhance cooperation between the Member States with a view to protecting, encouraging and implementing the principles of common cultural heritage.

Underline the significance of new methods of archaeological research, underwater cultural heritage, management of protected areas and saltpans as ecological museums, and emphasize that cultural heritage should be considered as a starting-point for sustainable development, and advocate the linking of all topics dealt with by the AII, thus facilitating the achievement of tangible results.

Encourage and promote activities leading to cooperation of higher education institutions in terms of joint projects, mobility initiatives, exchange of information, good practices and similar actions, ideally leading to joint study programmes.

Encourage the enlargement and the introduction of the innovative approaches for an integrated marine ecosystem observing and modelling system. In this respect the ministers support the ongoing projects (ADRICOSM, ASEMP, etc.) that could be used as a screening tool for the evaluation of the environment threats (river pollution, ballast water and oil spills) at an early phase.

Take note with satisfaction of the good results achieved by the UNIADRION network as a powerful tool to enhance the inter-university cooperation in the Adriatic-Ionian basin and jointly support its further development.

Underline the need to conclude Agreement on the implementation of the Subregional Contingency Plan among Croatia, Italy and Slovenia for the prevention of, and the response to, accidental maritime pollution of the Adriatic, drafted by REMPEC (UNEP/MAP/IMO). Confirm its importance for the wider region and call upon the rest of the countries of the Adriatic-Ionian region to be included in the Contingency Plan.

Advocate a stronger protection of the environment of the Adriatic and Ionian seas, which is ever more endangered due to the increasing maritime traffic, and its adverse effects on maritime ecosystem.

Underline the significance of short sea shipping and the introduction of new regulations of the International Maritime Organisation and the EU in the field of traffic security. The Ministers encourage organised action in this field in the countries where this issue has not yet been addressed and their integration into the European Short Sea Net and stress the need to continue the discussion on the measures to increase security in maritime transport in the Adriatic-Ionian region, also by formulating specific projects for the establishment of integrated IT systems for joint prevention and action in case of environmental disasters in the sea.

Place full trust in Serbia and Montenegro, represented by the Government of Montenegro, which will assume the AII Presidency for the period May 2004-May 2005.

Thank the Republic of Slovenia for the outstanding coordination and cooperation activities performed during its Chairmanship-in-Office of the AII Presidency and the excellent organisation of the 6th Adriatic and Ionian Council.

Portorož, 25 May 2004