

**The 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Adriatic and Ionian Council**  
**The Athens 2009 Declaration**  
Athens, 14 May 2009

**We, the Members of the Adriatic and Ionian Council: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hellenic Republic, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia,**

**Guided by** the Ancona Declaration of May 20<sup>th</sup> 2000 and its basic principles, the principles and statements expressed and confirmed by the Declarations of the Adriatic Ionian Councils from 2001 to 2008, as well as the principles and guidelines of the European Union:

**1. Emphasize** the significant role of the AII in strengthening cooperation and exploring ways for enhancing prosperity in the whole AII region, good neighbourly relations among the Participating States, and their bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and in fostering regional economic development; reaffirm the role of the AII in developing links of the Participating States with the Union for the Mediterranean, in order to foster economic development in the region through cooperation;

**2. Reaffirm** that enhanced regional cooperation is an effective incentive instrumental to fostering political and economic stability, thereby making it the most solid basis for progress in the European integration process;

**3. Express** our satisfaction concerning the progress so far made in transformation of the AII into a project-oriented initiative and stress the need for continued active and strong commitment of each Participating State; express also the wish to involve the AII in larger EU programmes with the aim of implementing projects in areas of common regional interest and for helping the dissemination of European best practices and experience in the AII region;

**4. Take note** of the discussions and the opinions expressed on the meetings of the Committee of Senior Officials during the Hellenic Chairmanship concerning further improvements of the performance of the AII, including the use of appropriate mechanisms of cooperation, designed to accomplish our priorities in the fields of common interest;

**5. Acknowledge** the merits of the decision to focus the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative to specific priorities included in the following Round Tables:

1. Round Table on Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
2. Round Table on Transport – Maritime cooperation
3. Round Table on Tourism – Culture – Inter-university cooperation
4. Round Table on Environment – Protection against fire

**6. Observe** with great satisfaction the laborious contribution to the AII by the Permanent Secretariat of the AII, seated in Ancona, under the guidance of Ambassador Alessandro Grafini as the first Secretary General of the AII-PS;

**7. Express their appreciation** to Italy and the Region Marche for their support in providing the necessary facilities and financial means for the AII-PS to be functional;

**8. Reiterate** the need to explore possibilities for mobilizing adequate financial resources in order to ensure significant progress in projects of common interest;

**9. Welcome** the progress achieved by some AII Participating States in their Euro-Atlantic and European Integration processes, commenced with full NATO membership of two AII Participating States; recognize that the EU and NATO enlargement are particularly powerful driving instruments for further substantial political economic and social reforms in the countries of the Adriatic-Ionian region;

**10. Recall** our agreement in Ancona on the need for deeper involvement of the EU in the Adriatic and Ionian area and our invitation to the European Commission to continue the cooperation already undertaken within the AII through complementary EU programmes;

**11. Reiterate** our determination to improve cooperation among the local and regional level of authorities within the AII;

**12. Welcome** the cooperation of the AII with all other regional organisations and initiatives in order to establish a more coordinated regional cooperation;

**13. Express** satisfaction regarding the reports of the Round Tables on Small and Medium Sized Enterprises; Transport and Maritime Cooperation; Tourism, Culture and Inter-University Cooperation; Environment and Protection Against Fire;

In particular:

**14. Express** our appreciation for the efforts made by the AII-PS, under the guidance of the Secretary General of the AII-PS, to coordinate the project-oriented activities of the AII and to efficiently facilitate the cooperation among the AII Participating States;

**15. Reiterate** our appreciation for the participation of experts from Participating States at AII Round Tables and support implementation of common projects contained in Joint Statements of AII Round Tables;

**16. Take note of** the overall project-oriented stance endorsed by the Committee of Senior Officials, facilitated by the Permanent Secretariat and displayed in the AII Round Tables;

**17. Support** the proposal of the Committee of Senior Officials to combine the high level expertise gathered in AII Round Tables into serving one concrete common goal, beneficial to all AII countries, which, during the Hellenic Chairmanship, was promoting regional tourism; furthermore expect this practice to be continued, so that additional goals might be defined, as well as ways and means to reach them pursuing common goals defined during previous chairmanships;

**18. Highlight** the importance of working with the private sector, civil society and academia, as it became manifest in the Adriatic-Ionian Conference for a regional development strategy, convened in Corfu, on 13 February 2009, where the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative had a brainstorming session with the Forum of Adriatic-Ionian Chambers of Commerce, the Forum of the Adriatic-Ionian Cities and Towns, the Adriatic-Ionian Network of Universities UNIADRION and national Press Agencies;

**19. Underline** the significance of regular contacts with other Organisations and Initiatives active in our broader region, such as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation, the Central European Initiative and the Regional Cooperation Council, in order to exchange information on activities and best practices, explore possible common grounds for concerted action and avoid duplication;

**20. Thank** the Hellenic Republic for its contribution to the Initiative over the period of its Chairmanship and the organisation of the 11<sup>th</sup> Adriatic and Ionian Council;

**21. Entrust** Italy with the next AII Chairmanship until 31<sup>st</sup> May 2010.