



REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



ADRIATIC AND IONIAN INITIATIVE  
CHAIRMANSHIP OF ALBANIA

# XVI Meeting of the Adriatic Ionian Council

A Special Meeting

*6 February 2014*  
*Athens Declaration*

**We, the Members of the Adriatic Ionian Council (AIC), representatives of the Governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia,**

**GUIDED BY** the Ancona Declaration of May 20, 2000 and its basic principles, as well as by the principles expressed by the consecutive AIC declarations from 2001 to 2013;

**RECALLING** the basic principles of the European Union and the “EU Western-Balkan Summit of Thessaloniki” (21-6-2003) reiterating the EU unequivocal support to the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries;

**CONFIRMING** that the ultimate aim of the action of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative is to boost the integration process of its non-EU Participating Countries .

**INSPIRED BY** the “Ancona Declaration on the support to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region” (EUSAIR) of 5th May 2010 as the first official document of the eight AII Government initiating the process for the establishment of the EUSAIR as well as by the Declarations of the AIC adopted in Brussels on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 2011, in Belgrade on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2012, and in Brussels on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2013;

**CONVINCED** that the EUSAIR will contribute to the goal of increasing prosperity, security and peace for the people living in the area which will further boost the integration process of non-EU Participating Countries of the AII;

**PERSUADED** that the adoption and the implementation of the EUSAIR will benefit the whole Adriatic and Ionian area by fostering stronger cooperation and investment, creating new opportunities for growth and new jobs, a healthier environment and improving its attractiveness, competitiveness and connectivity;

**ENCOURAGED BY** the active role played by the European Commission and the full support by all EU institutions to the Adriatic Ionian macro-regional perspective, expressed by:

- The **European Council Conclusions** of 13-14 December 2012 looking forward “to the presentation by the Commission of a new EU Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region before the end of 2014”;
- The adoption of the **Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions** on a Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas of 30 November 2012;
- The General Affairs Council Conclusions of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October, 2013, on added value of macro-regional strategies;
- The Report of the European Commission of the 27<sup>th</sup> of June, 2013, concerning the added value of macro-regional strategies;
- The Resolution on the evolution of EU macro-regional strategies by the **European Parliament** of July 3<sup>rd</sup> , 2012 urging the Council to adopt the Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region;
- The approval by the Assembly of the Committee of the Regions of the opinion on the “Territorial cooperation in the Mediterranean through the Adriatic Ionian Macro Region” adopted on October 11, 2011;
- The establishment of the **Adriatic and Ionian Interregional Group** at the Committee of the Regions, aimed at fostering a broader engagement and the proactive role of local/regional communities in the EUSAIR;

*RECALLING* the fundamental role of consultations among EUSAIR stakeholders organized by All Participating States and the European Commission with the aim of feeding the drafting of the EUSAIR Communication accompanied by an Action Plan to be adopted by the Commission and subsequently presented by the Commission to the General Affairs Council in June, 2014 and submitted to the Council for adoption in the second semester of this year;

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- 1) **REAFFIRM**, at this advanced stage of the process, their full commitment for the establishment and implementation of the EUSAIR and their strong belief that it represents the right instrument for fostering growth and sustainable development in the Region;
- 2) **REITERATE** their will to fully cooperate with the European Commission, in coherence with the Council Conclusions on added value of macro-regional strategies, adopted by the General Affairs Council on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October, 2013, during the preparation of the Communication accompanied by an Action Plan, the subsequent presentation by the Commission to the General Affairs Council in June, 2014 and the submission to the Council’s approval in the second semester of this year as well as during the subsequent implementation phase;

- 3) **PRAISE** all efforts made by their national stakeholders, in cooperation with the EU Commission, in the process of establishing the EUSAIR;
- 4) **THANK** the EUSAIR National Contact Points (NCPs) for their constant commitment to a fruitful cooperation among them and for the efficient coordination of their national focal points, giving a crucial contribution to the drafting of the Action Plan;
- 5) **INVITE** the Participating States to continue involving their national stakeholders in the phase of implementation of the Action Plan of the EUSAIR;
- 6) **EXPRESS** their commitment to efficient EUSAIR governance by ensuring full coordination/sinergy with territorial cooperation programmes while focusing on actions with a macroregional impact;
- 7) **THANK** the EU Commission, and particularly DG REGIO and DG MARE, for its full involvement in the process for establishing the EUSAIR, for its effective and dedicated coordination of the activities and for the drafting of working documents, including the “Discussion Paper on a EU Strategy for the Adriatic an Ionian Region (EUSAIR)” - in cooperation with NCPs - , as the basis for the Action Plan;
- 8) **WELCOME** the participation to the EUSAIR establishment process of the Adriatic Ionian civil society through the stakeholders consultations and **INVITE** them to continue giving their valuable contribution to the EUSAIR implementation phase;
- 9) **ASSESS** positively the choice by the AII Senior Officials to adapt its thematic Round Tables to EUSAIR priorities in order to concentrate all efforts to the focal common goal.
- 10) **THANK** the EU Commission, the Hellenic Presidency of the EU Council and the AII Albanian Chairmanship for having made possible the realization of this Extraordinary Adriatic Ionian Council on the occasion of the Stakeholder Conference on the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region in Athens and are also thankful to the future Italian Presidency of the EU Council for the active commitment related to the final adoption of the EUSAIR by the European Council in the second semester of the year.