



REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



ADRIATIC AND IONIAN INITIATIVE  
CHAIRMANSHIP OF ALBANIA

MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE  
ADRIATIC AND IONIAN INITIATIVE  
Friday, September 27, 2013

Agreed Minutes

The first meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative under the Albanian Chairmanship, was held in Tirana on September 27<sup>th</sup> 2013.

The meeting was chaired by **Mr. Agim Pasholli**, Albanian Senior Official and Chairman in Office, with the assistance of the AII Permanent Secretariat.

**1. Adoption of Agenda**

The chairman introduced the agenda that was adopted with no objection.

**2. Presentation of the Priorities of the Albania Chairmanship and Calendar of Events**

**Mr. Pasholli** acknowledged the participants with the political situation in Albania, reminding that the new Government had been established only two weeks before and illustrated the priorities and guidelines of the Albanian Government 's Foreign Policy: importance of the Euro-Atlantic path; excellent relations with EU; Albanian credibility in the Region; stability in the country and in the Region; hard work to attain the EU Candidate Status; improving cooperation with neighboring Countries.

The Priorities of the AII Chairmanship of Albania will naturally be in line with these principles. The Albanian Government is aware that its Chairmanship will be exercised in a very crucial period of the process for the approval of the EUSAIR, since the European Council is expected to give its final endorsement by the end of 2014. Therefore **the inter-governmental work of the AII** in particular, needs **to converge** towards a common goal of arriving at that date fully prepared and able to manage, together with EU institution, the new EU Strategy and turn it into an operational platform.

Relying to a such political platform, the Albanian Presidency has summarized its future action in the slogan: **“Sailing faster towards EUSAIR, Driving closer towards EU”**.

In order to carry out its program and to enhance cooperation, the most important instruments at disposal of the AII Presidency will be the thematic **Round Tables on SME-s; Transport and Maritime Cooperation; Rural Development; Protection Against Fire; Culture; Interuniversity Cooperation** .

The Chairman then illustrated the Calendar of the Albanian Presidency, previously distributed to the participants. He underlined the importance of the first event of the Calendar - **the Round Table on SME-s**, foreseen for the first week of November, and asked for the help of the AII Senior Officials in order to provide the Albanian Presidency ( through the PS or directly ) with the contacts of their respective Ministries to be involved in this Round Table as soon as possible.

**The Chairman** then, introduced **Mrs. Tefta Demeti** , Head of the Business and SME Development at the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Entrepreneurship. She said that, although the new Minister had been only recently appointed, he is very interested in this activity and has already created a “working group” with representatives of various Departments of the Ministry, which are already in the process of organizing the meeting. She added that the subject would probably cover the aspects of the increase of competitiveness among enterprises and innovation. The Ministry had involved the Albanian Chambers of Commerce and private stakeholders, and is trying to define the themes that will be treated as well as the exact date. She also renewed the request to the AII SO “to provide contacts of their respective Ministries in due time” to allow the invitations to be sent to the appropriate stakeholders.

**Mr. Pasholli** then illustrated some difficulties met on the organization of the **Round Table on Transport and Maritime Cooperation** because of structural changes in the pertinent Albanian Ministry. He said however he was confident that the event will be realized since it is considered to be very important and directly connected with EUSAIR.

The two **Conferences on the Adriatic Ionian Macroregion**, foreseen in the Calendar, should be organized with the cooperation of the European Commission even though Tirana had not found, so far, the expected feedback from EU Commission which maintains that, being the road map of the events regarding the EUSAIR already closed, it would be very difficult to insert new appointments. The Chairman added that Tirana is still intentioned to arrange them, probably in a national and regional format, should it be the case even without the EU Commission help.

**Mr. Pasholli** informed that his Ministry is in touch with the Ministry of Agriculture for the organization of the **Round Table on Rural Development** (probably by January 2014) before or after the 2° CSO which will take place in **Ancona**. It's still early to be more precise, but Senior Officials will be informed in advance about dates and agenda.

Presenting the **Round Table on Protection Against Fire**, ( a traditional good practice of AII meetings) **the Chairman** introduced **Mr. Maksimilian Dhima**, Director of Planning and Coordination of Civil Emergencies at the Ministry of Interiors. **Mr. Dhima** confirmed the success of the previous meeting in Sezana (Slovenia) last year and said that the organization of the RT would involve two Albanian Ministries - Interiors and Environmental - or , if structural changes occur in the mean time, an Agency which will be charged to organize it. He stated that the meeting will be focused on the identification of viable solutions of the problems, being the difficulties regarding the fight against fire well known due to a consolidated experience.

As far as the **Parliamentary Dimension**, **Mr. Pasholli** affirmed that the Albanian Presidency will work to implement the dossier in order to give implementation to the proposal put forward by the Italian Parliamentary Delegation, and accepted last May by the Speakers of the Houses in Lubjana , to create **parliamentary delegations to the AII**.

**The Chairman** then introduced **Mr. Dritan Delija**, expert from the Foreign Relations Department of the Albanian Parliament. **Mr. Delija** said that the new Speaker of the Albanian Parliament had already given a positive answer to the organization of this event, and would appreciate help and suggestions from the All PS and their respective colleagues in the AII Countries. Structural changes internal to the Albanian Parliament might occur during the second part of this year. The Conference will be organized preferably in Tirana by March 2014.

As far as the **University Cooperation**, **the Chairman** in Office informed that Tirana University had agreed to organize a meeting in the Uniadrion framework and the Deputy Rector will soon visit Ancona.

**The Chairman** then said that the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is inclined to organize the **Adriatic Ionian Council in Brussels**, where Foreign Ministers as well as representatives of EU Commission or DG –s. can assure more easily their participation.

He informed finally that the Chairmanship is arranging a **meeting of the Albanian Foreign Minister**, Mr. Ditmir Bushati, with the Secretary General of AII, Amb. Pigliapoco in Tirana.

Concluding, **Mr. Pasholli** renovated the request to provide the **Permanent Secretariat and/or the Chairmanship** with the relevant contacts in their respective Countries and started a “tour de table“ for inputs, recommendations, suggestion or proposals on the Draft Calendar or about its activities aimed to improve or implement it.

**Slovenia, Mr. Mitja Mocnik**, Thanked the Presidency for the hospitality and wished it success in the crucial period leading to the approval of the EUSAIR. He highly appreciated the work and the efforts of the Permanent Secretariat and assured the Presidency that Ljubjana will provide the Chairmanship with all necessary contacts and suggestions deriving from the experience achieved last year during the Slovenian Chairmanship.

**Serbia, Mr. Pavle Jankovic** Said that he recognized the challenge and the difficulties of programming a Calendar of activities during a period of political and governmental changes. He assured that he will provide all the necessary contacts for all the planned activities of the Calendar of the Albania Chairmanship. Regarding the difficulties encountered in programming the two Conferences on the EUSAIR, he suggested the Presidency to focus their topics on themes coinciding with the EUSAIR - Discussion Paper Pillar (Tourism) that Albania is leading together with Croatia. He guaranteed full support from Serbian Institutions and assured his personal cooperation.

**Montenegro** The representative of the Montenegrinian Embassy assured that he would send his colleagues and the respective Montenegrin institutions a detailed report on the meeting.

**Italy represented by Dott.ssa Susanna Schlein of the Italian Embassy** apologized for the Italian Senior Official’s absence, due to an urgent official engagement, She thanked Albania for the organization of the meeting and expressed the Italian high appreciation for the Calendar of the Albanian Chairmanship. She assured the full support of the Italian Government to the Albanian Chairmanship and informed the attendants that Rome and Tirana are preparing a bilateral meeting between the Italian Foreign Minister, Emma Bonino, and her Albanian homologue, Mr. Bushati. The **Chairman in Office** added that it would be

appropriate to include in the Ministers's agenda, information on AII and EUSAIR and that Tirana will make it sure that this topic will be touched during the meeting.

**Greece S.O. Ms. Ourania Tsiknaki** considered very interesting the priorities of the Albania Chairmanship and agreed with the Calendar of the activities. She wished a successful Chairmanship to her Albanian colleague. She then drew the attention of the audience on the event of the presentation of the result of the stakeholder 's consultation on " Driving innovative maritime and marine growth" in the EUSAIR framework (scheduled on 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> of February in Athens) and asked colleagues to take note of it so as to avoid overlapping with other events to be programmed.

**Mr. Pasholli** took the floor to confirm that he had already informed the appropriate Albanian structure.

**Croatia Mrs. Gordana Vranicki Kralj** thanked for the hospitality and expressed appreciation for the Program and the Calendar of Activities of the Albanian Presidency.

Referring to her intervention, **the Chairman in Office** took the floor to underline that, since Albania and Croatia will be working together in the framework of EUSAIR on the common pillar: "Increasing regional attractiveness" (Tourism), they will have to try to have frequent exchanges of information, correspondence and on line consultations about the topic, not only at Ministries of Foreign Affairs level, but, most of all, among relevant line Ministries dealing in both Countries with specific topics.

**Mrs. Vranicki Kralj** agreed.

### **3. Programme of –activities of the Permanent Secretariat of the AII under joint responsibility of the Chairman – in – Office and the Secretary General**

The Secretary General reminded that the yearly Programme of activities and Report of the results of the Permanent Secretariat under the joint responsibility of the Chairmanship-in-Office and the Secretary General had already been circulated to the Senior Officials and considered positively by them. He then underlined the excellent relations established with the Albanian Chairmanship, and assured that the AII - PS will continue to give its full support to the Presidency.

One of the main goals of the AII-PS will be to develop and further strengthen relations with local and regional authorities and, above all, with the **three Adriatic Ionian Fora**, as well as with other networks or associations operating in the Adriatic Ionian basin. As for the three Fora located in Ancona, cooperation has been very active since the

establishment of the Permanent Secretariat and continues to be even more productive after the creation of the “**Integrated Secretariat**” last May, which implies a stricter cooperation, regular meetings, exchange of documents and experiences, and common activities.

Coordinating the “Integrated Secretariat” also means to convey the voice of the Adriatic Ionian civil society in the meetings of NCP and the Commission.

Besides its usual secretarial activities, two fields of activity have become more relevant within the responsibility of the AII – PS during the last period:

- Assistance to the Chairmanship in Office in the process of establishment of the Adriatic Ionian Macro-Region (“Belgrade Declaration, point 8);
- Regional Cooperation Programme (RCP) for the co-funding of small AII cooperation projects.

As for the EUSAIR, the AII-PS will continue to assist the AII Presidency and will keep NCPs and stakeholders informed about the intergovernmental activity of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative and convey to them indications, needs and suggestions by the Fora of Civil Societies. The AII-PS will perform its functions in close and constant cooperation with the Chairmanship-in-Office, in line with the decisions taken by the different bodies of the AII during the year.

Public opinion can be acquainted with PS and FORA activities consulting the website: [www.aii-ps.org](http://www.aii-ps.org) .

**Serbia** expressed great satisfaction for the collaboration of the PS with the civil societies and said it fully supported the work performed by the Permanent Secretariat.

**Italy** expressed high appreciation for the excellent relationships established by the PS with the civil societies. FORA are very important especially in view of the development of the Action Plan.

#### **4. Report on the “Regional Cooperation Program 2012” by Secretary General**

**The Secretary General** provided a short updated Report on the state of art and the actual phase of performance of the projects of the RCP.

At present, most of the projects are in their implementation phase and the applicants have requested an advanced payment in order to start expenditures for project activities. Only two of the approved projects have delayed their start up because of administrative problems.

Most of the applicants have already sent their “Progress Implementation Report” including already realized project activities and funds spent during the first phase of the project.

Starting from this autumn, the AII-PS will be engaged **in monitoring and supervising** projects activities. This will be a fundamental activity aimed at verifying that the follow-up of projects is carried out transparently and efficiently and that the funds are well spent.

**Serbia** thanked the SG, for the information and the Italian Government for the financing of the RCP, highly appreciating the performance of RCP.

**Albania** , Mr Pasholli thanked the SG for the communication on the RCP. As far as the Albanian project (Valorization and protection of quality agro – food products )he said the he is in touch with the Albanian Ministry of Agriculture as well as the PS. He said that the entire RCP program and especially the present phase are very important and could pave the way for future larger activities in the framework of EUSAIR.

**Italy**, expressed satisfaction for the transparent and clear information and the phase of follow up of the RCP, financed by the Italian Government.

##### **5. Information on the process for the approval of the EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Macro Region (by the Contact points for the EU Strategy for the EUSAIR**

**The Chairman** opened the floor for contributions, As Albanian NCP he is full engaged to establish contacts with local interlocutors from Albanian Ministries and Institutions and had already concluded the circulating of the documents of EU Commission (“non paper” and “discussion paper”) . He then expressed his hope that very soon Albanian actors will give a suitable feedback to the on line consultation on tourism.

**Italy** Reminding that Italy and Serbia are already at work for the Pillar of the Discussion Paper - “Connecting the Region” they share together, the Italian delegate mentioned the next steps on the topic:

- 14<sup>th</sup> of October, Ancona (Italy)“Connecting the Adriatic and Ionian Region – Challenges and Goals towards a successful EUSAIR Plan of Action”, the last draft version of the Program was distributed;

**Serbia , Mr. Jankovic** made an accurate and detailed description of how Serbia has arranged the phase of information, consultation and implementation on EUSAIR, also referring to the experience matured for the Strategy of Danube Macroregion.

**Mr. Pasholli**, appreciated very much such a clear exposure and asked for a written memory on this item that Mr. Jankovic promised to provide by mail . He added that his country deals for the first time with an EU Strategy and asked for the contribution of both Croatia and Slovenia that have already experienced it in the framework of the Danube Macroregion, in order to meet this challenge the best possible way.

**Slovenia, Mr. Mocnik** also made a brief report about the Slovenian participation on the Strategy for the Danube Macroregion.

**The Greek SO, Mrs. Tsiknaki** said that also Greek institutions are intensively working on the EUSAIR with the collaboration of the EU Commissioner Damanaki.

#### **6. Any other business**

Since there were no other issues to be discussed, the Chairman concluded the CSO meeting expressing satisfaction for the useful exchange of opinions, ideas and experiences.