



Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Central European Initiative

23 June 2021

Adriatic Ionian Initiative Secretary General – Amb. Giovanni Castellaneta

- Honourable Chair, Minister Radulović, CEI SG Antonione, Ministers, Excellencies...
- I would like to thank you for the invitation and for the organization of this high-level event.
- As you might know, the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative Permanent Secretariat and the Central European Initiative CEI - Executive Secretariat signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** on the occasion of the Adriatic and Ionian Council, held in Budva on May 8th 2019, for a shared action for our respective regions, under the All Montenegrin Chairmanship.
- The signature sealed a strong long-standing partnership between our two organizations and contributes to fostering regional cooperation and sustainable development.
- Within this overall framework, we developed, together with the CEI Secretariat, an initiative named “**Active Young Citizens for Sustainable Development in CEI and All areas**”, to raise awareness in high school students on the *UN Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals*.
- The importance of this joint programme has also been recognized by the ten All / EUSAIR Participating countries, reflected in the Izola Declaration adopted last May by the ten Ministers of Foreign Affairs.
- I am therefore really glad that the **2nd edition** of this Joint initiative will be launched soon. In this respect, let me also thank the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the valuable support throughout the whole process.
- The Adriatic and Ionian Initiative and EUSAIR play a special role as Regional Organizations in the process of the European integration of its non-EU Member

States as well as in promoting the sustainable development and economic growth of all its Participating Countries through concrete cooperation activities.

- It is clear that there is room for synergies and for exchanging information and experiences between our intergovernmental / multilateral initiatives, starting with a process of **bottom-up involvement of representatives of Civil Society** (Municipalities, Universities, Chambers of Commerce) that the All has always promoted through the mechanism of our Round Tables.
- From June 2021, the Chairmanship of the All has been held by the **Republic of Albania** which intends to continue its activities aimed at upgrading this type of regional cooperation and consolidating the Initiative as a regional structure, with a specific focus on the Youth dossier.
- I can assure you that the All and its Permanent Secretariat will act to continue to be an essential tool for fostering regional cooperation by further enhancing policy dialogue and cooperation.
Special attention will be also reserved to the promotion of European standards and values, basic preconditions for the full involvement and complete integration of the Western Balkans in the European Union.
We will support the EU perspective of the non-EU Member States, thus representing an impetus to the enlargement and integration process.
- In this regard I would like to congratulate Slovenia on a successful, dynamic and proactive All Presidency just concluded. The **Izola Declaration** adopted by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs sends a strong message in terms of importance of EU enlargement policy and on the positive outcomes that the EUSAIR embedding process is producing.
- I wish success to the **Republic of Montenegro** for the rest of their CEI Presidency. We had a great experience working with them during the All Chairmanship.
- Thank you again for the invitation to this meeting.