

JOINT STATEMENT

XIX Conference of Presidents / Speakers of Parliaments of the Adriatic & Ionian Initiative All Chairmanship of Greece

May 22-23, 2025, Ioannina

The Presidents/Speakers, Deputy Speakers and representatives of the Parliaments of the Participating Countries to the Adriatic & Ionian Initiative (All), met in Ioannina, on May 23, 2025, within the framework of the Hellenic Presidency of the **All / EUSAIR** (from June 1st, 2024, to May 30th, 2025).

The two main sessions of the Conference were devoted to the *European perspective and the accession path of the Western Balkans*, as well as to the *diversification of the tourism offer in the Adriatic-Ionian Region*. Following the debates held, the following considerations were adopted:

- **GUIDED** by the principles of the founding document - the Ancona Declaration of 20 May 2000;
- **TAKING STOCK** of the commitments made during all the previous meetings of the Presidents/Speakers of All Parliaments;
- **FIRMLY BELIEVING** that the European Union's values are the basic principles of cooperation among the countries of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative;
- **REFERRING** to the basic principles of the Dubrovnik Declaration of May, 2016;
- **GUIDED** by the principle that national parliaments -as the closest institutions to the citizens- could play a central role in implementing the goals of the Strategy;
- **CONFIDENT** that the implementation of the EUSAIR with the support of the activities carried out in the framework of its governance structures and the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative -its governmental anchorage- will promote sustainable economic prosperity in the Adriatic and Ionian Region;
- **RECOGNISING** that this Initiative has significantly contributed to building trust, intensifying cooperation, integrating and adopting European values and standards;
- **AWARE** of the fact that economic growth is fundamental in order to achieve social peace and political stability in the Adriatic-Ionian region;
- **RECOGNISING** the significance of strengthening cooperation within this forum for achieving long-term regional stability and stronger economic development of the Adriatic-Ionian region;
- **RECOGNIZING** the need to enhance synergies among EU funding mechanisms, territorial frameworks, and policies to drive sustainable regional development post-2027, keeping and promoting Cohesion Policy in the center of a prosperous and cohesive Europe;
- **COMMITTING** ourselves to stand together in the face of complex threats and challenges against security in Europe and in the Mediterranean area, and to uphold and safeguard international law, democratic values and the rule-based international order;

- **RECOGNIZE** that the EUSAIR and All are important means to foster economic integration and territorial cohesion of the Adriatic and Ionian region;

- **TRUST** that a larger Union is also a stronger Union and **RECALL** the importance of the EU enlargement process as a driver for growth, stability and security in the AI area;
- **BELIEVE** that EU enlargement remains a key driver of long-term security, peace, stability and prosperity in Europe. It continues to promote common values while fostering growth and reconciliation;
- **ENGAGE** to continue supporting the European integration aspirations of the Western Balkans and supporting candidates in their bid for accession in the European Union;
- **EMPHASISE** that for the EUSAIR Action Plan to fully succeed in unleashing economic prosperity and for EU enlargement to progress in the Western Balkans, it is crucial to continue investing in fundamental reforms, institution building, democratic governance, rule of law and civil society engagement;
- **ACKNOWLEDGE** the progress made by the AI/EUSAIR participating EU candidate countries, and **ENCOURAGE** them to remain focused on reforms aimed at demonstrating their adherence to European values, standards and principles, with special emphasis on the fundamentals of the EU accession process, regional cooperation and good neighborly relations;
- **UNDERLINE** that the EU membership perspective of the AI/EUSAIR participating EU candidate countries is a driving force for transformation of the whole Adriatic and Ionian region;
- **STRESS** that EU enlargement in the Western Balkans should maintain its dynamic and its credibility, based on a solid, merit-based and reversible EU accession process, focused on implementation of fundamental reforms and further economic integration within the region and between the region and the EU;
- **UNDERLINE** the importance of civil society and youth engagement in the macro-regional process;
- **UNDERLINE** the necessity for a bottom-up approach also involving civil society, of which full involvement and participation in the process can provide an added-value;
- **CALL** upon European institutions and the EUSAIR participating countries and stakeholders to strengthen their commitment to the implementation of successful macro-regional projects with necessary political support, guaranteed funding and recognized added value;
- **BELIEVE** that tourism is a crucial and beneficial sector for the AI Region as providing financial means and incentives for the preservation of cultural history, local heritage sites and customs;
- **BELIEVE** that sustainable tourism has evolved from a conceptual objective into a strategic necessity. In the context of accelerating climate change, recurring global crises, and increasing societal expectations, the responsible management of tourism constitutes a key priority for national administrations, private stakeholders, and local communities;
- **CALL** AI/EUSAIR member states to strengthen their collaborative efforts in promoting sustainable tourism models. These include, but are not limited to, maritime, gastronomical, cultural, and agricultural tourism, which are particularly well-suited to the region's natural and cultural profile. Emphasis should be placed on tourism forms that highlight local traditions, historical and cultural heritage, and environmental assets;
- **HIGHLIGHT** the need to foster the green and digital transition of tourism, as well as strengthening resilience and skills in the sector;

- **WISH FOR** the liaison of tourism with agriculture by promoting healthy and authentic food products, Mediterranean cuisine, and a holistic approach to tourism through gastronomy;
- **UNDERLINE** that all countries share a common interest for the conservation and protection of the Adriatic-Ionian coastal and continental environment and believe that the development of special interest tourism's aspects, such as ecotourism and fishing tourism, is an important factor for the economy of the All macro-region;
- **EMPHASISE** that culture and tourism have a mutually beneficial relation, which can enhance regions' and countries' attractiveness; culture is an increasingly important element of the tourism product, as it creates distinction in a global market;
- **WISH FOR** the promotion of investment opportunities in tourism sector in the AI area and strengthening women's and youth entrepreneurship;
- **RECOGNISE** the need for the AI countries to reduce bureaucracy, simplify legislation and upgrade infrastructure in order to enhance their competitiveness at a global scale;
- **REITERATE** our strong support towards activities carried out at regional, national, macro-regional and transnational levels, related to the development and prosperity of the Adriatic-Ionian region;
- **LOOK FORWARD** to strengthening EUSAIR's role in post-2027 EU Cohesion Policy, promoting regional cooperation, resilience to crises, and sustainable development. The "think locally, plan macro-regionally, act Europeanly" approach underpins our aim to foster a place-based strategy for addressing regional challenges within EUSAIR;
- **ENCOURAGE** exploring EU funding mechanisms and financial instruments in line with regional needs and policies;
- **CALL** for a stronger political ownership of MRS objectives to align regional and EU priorities;
- **APPRECIATE** the traditional All connecting role between Governments, regional actors and civil society fora and their networks as a key element for the success of the EUSAIR;
- **LOOK FORWARD** to building capacity for capturing and disseminating project impacts to ensure their long-term sustainability, preparing for the next programming period;
- **HIGHLIGHT** the role of All Parliaments and their capital importance as direct representatives of the peoples and believing that their cooperation will boost the existing excellent neighbourly relations among our peoples;
- **APPRECIATE** the traditional All connecting role between Parliaments, Governments, regional actors, civil society fora and their networks as a key element for the success of the EUSAIR;
- **AFFIRM** the role of the All as the "political anchorage" to the EUSAIR and support the Permanent Secretariat for its efforts aimed at maintaining efficient links with the EUSAIR pillars as well as civil society at large;
- **THANK** Greece for a constructive and productive Chairmanship of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative and Co-presidency of the EUSAIR Governing Board;
- **WISH** success to North Macedonia in its mission as the upcoming Chairmanship of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative and in effectively Co-Chairing the EUSAIR;