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AI-NURECC PLUS High-level launch event

Friday 2 July (10:00-12:30)

Amb. Giovanni Castellaneta – All Secretary General

10:00-10:50 OPENING SESSION: “The productive multilevel collaboration continues”

- Distinguished Secretary General, Excellencies, Honourable guests,
- I am pleased to be here at this kick-off event of the **AI-NURECC Plus** organized by the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions.
- An Initiative which has been supported by the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative Permanent Secretariat from its conception considering the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, among them, the **Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities (FAIC)**, **Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce (Forum AIC)**, and **Association of Universities of the Adriatic-Ionian area (UniAdrion)**.
- Let me in this regard remind you that All has assumed the role of “**Advocate of Civil Society**” since the endorsement of the EUSAIR Strategy considering its strong connection with the three above-mentioned Fora based in Ancona.
- A project like this, which aims to support the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) implementation and to promote a more effective cooperation among Regional and Local Authorities, Universities, Chambers of Commerce, youth associations and networks, entrepreneurs and civil society, ensuring deep and broad territorial coverage, at regional and local level, can only have our support, in the belief that with **subsidiarity** and with the involvement of a qualified civil society, the Strategy can make a quality step forward.
- Let me also use this occasion to warmly thank the **All Slovenian Chairmanship** for their Presidency. It has been an pro-active Presidency full of high-level events. I can



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assure you that the All Permanent Secretariat is very satisfied with the work brought forward.

- 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, which is also a key topic of your AI-NURECC Plus.
- Tirana will also be European Youth Capital 2022. This is something is worth exploiting during the All Albanian Chairmanship considering the complementary topics we are dealing with.
- It is clear that there is room for synergies and for exchanging information and experiences between our multilateral initiatives and projects, 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.
- Throughout the entire All Albanian Chairmanship, the Permanent Secretariat will try to promote a qualified participation in the Round Tables by financing travel and accommodation for civil society experts who can make a concrete contribution to the work of Round Tables. This is to finally implement the principle of subsidiarity which is the basis of the EUSAIR.
- As Permanent Secretariat, we have tried to tackle the issues of younger generations from different angles and perspectives in the last several years, developing concrete opportunities for young people and students, from scholarships to university courses, from internships to projects for high school students.
- Investing in young people is indeed one of the best way to strengthen the Western Balkans, creating the foundation for a stronger and better society.
- In this context, the All will grant 10 two-year scholarships to students coming from All participating countries to attend classes at the Università Politecnica delle Marche, starting from September 2021. Moreover, the All will finance a university course (at the Università Politecnica delle Marche) on issues relating to European integration



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and the economic-political development of the countries involved in the AII and EUSAIR Strategy.

- Furthermore, the AII Permanent Secretariat has realized together with the **Central European Initiative**, an initiative named “**Active Young Citizens for Sustainable Development in CEI and AII areas**”. The overall objective of the project was to raise awareness of CEI/AII countries’ high-school students on the UN Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.
- The **second call of the project will be launched before the end of 2021**.
- Let me conclude by sincerely thanking the Presidents and Secretary Generals of the Fora of Civil Society – who are present with us today - which have established, through the years, an excellent and fruitful cooperation with the AII Permanent Secretariat and have greatly contributed to the implementation of the EUSAIR Strategy and its Action Plan.
- The EUSAIR institutional mechanism is now producing concrete results, thanks to all the work carried out with the embedding process, but it will be an empty box without the commitment of civil society. You have a big opportunity and responsibility to implement the EUSAIR, being aware that you have the **full support of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative**.
- Thank you, once again, for the invitation and I look forward to hear the rest of the discussion.