



**ADRIATIC AND IONIAN INITIATIVE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA**

**XX CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS/SPEAKERS OF PARLIAMENTS  
OF THE ADRIATIC AND IONIAN INITIATIVE  
Skopje, North Macedonia, April 23-24, 2026**

**JOINT STATEMENT**

The XX Conference of Presidents/Speakers of Parliaments of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative took place in Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia on 23 and 24 April 2026, under the chairmanship of the President of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, Mr. Afrim Gashi.

At the Conference, the participating countries were represented by: Speaker of the House of Peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Kemal ADEMOVIĆ, Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Croatian Parliament Mr. Andro KRSTULOVIC OPARA, Vice President of the Senate of the Parliament of the Italian Republic Mr. Gian Marco CENTINAIO, Vice President of the Parliament of Montenegro Mr. Nikolla CAMAJ, President of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia Mr. Afrim GASHI, Members of the Great and General Council of the Republic of San Marino Ms. Marinella L. CHIARUZZI and Mr. Giovanni Maria ZONZINI, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia Ms. Nevena DJURIC.

Republic of Albania, Hellenic Republic and Republic of Slovenia were represented at diplomatic level.

The two main sessions of the Conference were *Promoting Peace and Stability Through Parliamentary Diplomacy* and *Strengthening Regional Connectivity: Corridors VIII and X and the Role of Parliaments*. Following the debates held during these sessions, the participants adopted the following considerations:

**GUIDED** by the vision and principles set forth in the Ancona Declaration, which established the foundations of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative as a framework for political dialogue and regional cooperation;

**RECOGNISING** the central role of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region and the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative as complementary platforms for fostering connectivity, sustainable development and economic resilience;

**REAFFIRMING** the principles contained in joint statements adopted at previous meetings of the Presidents/Speakers of Parliaments of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative, which highlight the essential role of Parliaments in promoting regional cooperation in the Adriatic and Ionian Region;

**CONSIDERING** that national parliaments, as the closest democratic institutions to citizens, have a pivotal role in promoting regional stability and security, facilitating dialogue among states, and ensuring that the objectives of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region translate into concrete, citizen-centered policies;

**EMPHASISING** that the values and standards of the European Union — democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, solidarity and good neighbourly relations — remain the political compass guiding cooperation among the countries of the Adriatic and Ionian region;

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**RENEW** their commitment to strengthening peace, stability, and good neighbourly relations in the Adriatic and Ionian region by enhancing parliamentary diplomacy, fostering constructive political dialogue, building mutual trust, and promoting cooperation based on shared democratic values and respect for international law, in line with the principles of the European Union;

**REITERATE** the strong support for the enlargement policy of the European Union and recognize the important role of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) in strengthening post-2027 cohesion policy;

**ADVOCATE** greater regional ownership, deeper transnational cooperation, and improved access to EU funding instruments, including the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, to advance alignment with the EU acquis and accelerate accession based on merit and sustained reforms;

**COMMIT** to promoting a human-centric digital transformation by aligning legislation and standards with the EU acquis, strengthening secure digital infrastructure, and advancing digital skills to improve transparency, public services, and cross-border cooperation;

**AFFIRM** the commitment to enhanced cooperation and mutual support in strengthening cybersecurity and advancing cyber-resilient societies, recognizing these efforts as fundamental to building a shared, secure, and stable future;

**CALL FOR** coordinated regional and multi-level efforts to reduce infrastructural disparities between EU and non-EU countries through strategic investments in sustainable transport and cross-border connectivity, thereby fostering economic growth and regional integration;

**UNDERLINE** the strategic importance of Corridor VIII and Corridor X for enhancing regional integration, economic development, and connectivity in Southeast Europe, and commit to supporting coordinated legislative action, oversight of infrastructure investments, and alignment with EU transport standards in order to accelerate their completion and maximize their contribution to integration with the European Union internal market;

**SUPPORT** enhanced macro-regional cultural cooperation, encouraging the sharing of expertise and resources to protect and promote common cultural heritage and to strengthen mutual understanding and cultural diplomacy;

**ENCOURAGE** enhanced regional cooperation to foster a sustainable, resilient and diversified tourism sector, recognising its key role in the Adriatic and Ionian Region's economic prosperity and in achieving EUSAIR objectives, while promoting tourism models that highlight the region's natural beauty, cultural heritage and local traditions;

**RESOLVE TO** empower youth as equal partners in policy-making by ensuring access to quality education, employment opportunities, and structured participation mechanisms, thus addressing demographic challenges and securing a sustainable future for the Adriatic and Ionian Region;

**THANK** Republic of North Macedonia for the constructive and productive chairmanship of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative and the Assembly for the organization of the XX Conference of Presidents of Parliaments;

**WISH** every success to Italy, the next presiding participating country of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative.