



**XVI CONFERENCE
OF PRESIDENTS OF PARLIAMENTS
OF THE ADRIATIC AND IONIAN INITIATIVE
18-19 March 2019, Budva**

JOINT STATEMENT

The XVI Conference of Presidents of Parliaments of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative took place in Budva, Montenegro, on 18-19 March 2019, chaired by President of the Parliament of Montenegro Mr Ivan Brajović.

At the conference, the participating states were represented by: Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Albania Mr Gramoz Ruçi, Deputy Chairman of the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina Mr Nebojša Radmanović, Deputy Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament Mr Georgios Varemenos, Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Croatia Mr Gordan Jandroković, Vice President of the Senate of the Republic of Italy Ms Paola Taverna, Deputy Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Republic of Italy Mr Ettore Rosato, President of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia Mr Talat Xhaferi, President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia Mr Dejan Židan and Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia Ms Maja Gojković,

The following also took part: Vice President of the Parliament of Montenegro Mr Genci Nimanbegu, Chairperson of the Committee on International Relations and Emigrants Mr Andrija Nikolić, Chairperson of the Committee on Education, Science, Culture and Sports Mr Radule Novović, Deputy Chairperson of the Committee on European Integration Mr Adrijan Vuksanović and Member of the Croatian Parliament Mr Branko Bačić.

The participants were addressed by: Prime Minister of Montenegro Mr Duško Marković, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Srđan Darmanović, Minister of Sustainable Development and Tourism Mr Pavle Radulović, Minister of Culture Mr Aleksandar Bogdanović and Secretary General of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative Mr Giovanni Castellaneta.

Parliaments of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII) member states:

- Guided by the principles of the founding document - the Ancona Declaration of 20 May 2000;
- Committed to respecting all documents adopted at the previous meetings of presidents of parliaments of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative;
- Firmly believing in the values of the European Union, as basic principles for cooperation among the All countries;
- Recognising the significance of strengthening cooperation within this forum for achieving long-term regional stability and stronger economic development of the Adriatic-Ionian region;
- Guided by the principle that national parliaments, composed of directly elected representatives of citizens, have a key role in promoting good neighbourly relations and meeting the aims of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region which should ensure the strengthening of economic cooperation and prosperity of all participating states;
- Aware that parliamentary cooperation at all levels provides a strong incentive to the development of cooperation in all other areas;
- Convinced that preserving values of the EU and its further strengthening, as well as enlargement towards the Western Balkans, are essential for permanent peace and stability of Europe;

- Acknowledge that cooperation of national parliaments within the All is important for the identification of projects of regional character which should support, among others, the integration of the Western Balkans to EU;
- Provide support to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region which represents a useful tool of cooperation among the EU countries and candidate countries and potential candidates for membership;
- Believe that the implementation of aims from the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region will encourage better cooperation, improve attractiveness and competition, which are essential for economic growth, establishment of social peace, political stability and building of good neighbourly relations in this region;
- Calls on European institutions to strengthen their political and financial support to the implementation of strategic and other projects from the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region;
- Emphasise that tourism sector is becoming increasingly important factor of economic prosperity of the Adriatic and Ionian Region and Europe and that more intensive regional cooperation in this field is key for fulfilling aims from the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region;

- Calls on all national, regional and local authorities, private sector and NGOs to continue developing synergy between strategies of sustainable tourism and cultural sectors, including innovative services and business models, with the aim of encouraging valuable cultural and tourist offers and revitalisation of urban and rural areas;
- Encourage All participating states to improve regional dimension of cooperation and exchange best practices in the field of tourism, believing that successful cooperation at the regional level demands active participation of national, regional and local authorities and organisations;
- Confirm political support to activities undertaken at national, cross-border and regional level, related to the development in tourism sector and protection of cultural heritage in the Adriatic and Ionian Region;
- Confirm the importance of preserving cultural and historical identity of the Adriatic-Ionian region as well as the importance of cultural routes as a key driver of sustainable social and economic development and cohesion of the region;
- Encourage participating states to promote joint tourist products with the aim of positioning Adriatic and Ionian Region as one of the leading tourist destinations in Europe;
- Emphasise the importance of improving the infrastructure which has an essential role in increasing transparency and connectivity of the region;
- Believe that skilled labour force is a key element for the development of tourism and therefore invite all interested parties to invest additionally in human capital in this sector;
- Note the importance of safety and security for the sustainable development of a tourist destination, and call for stronger cooperation and exchange of good practices among participating states of the All;
- Thank Montenegro for the constructive and productive chairmanship of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative and the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region;
- Wish a lot of success in chairmanship of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative and the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region to the next presiding country - the Republic of Serbia.