

# 17<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Presidents/Speakers of Parliaments of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative

Ljubljana, 15 April 2021

11.00 – 13.00

Honourable President **Borut Pahor**,  
Dear President **Igor Zorčič**,  
Distinguished ministers,  
Dear Members of All Parliaments  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to greet you all today. This Conference shows how the Covid-19 pandemic has not stop the need and commitment of our Participating Countries to cooperate and enhance policy dialogue for the benefit of our common region.

I sincerely hope that next year, under the Albanian Presidency of the Initiative, we will have the chance to meet again in person.

Let me **thank the Slovenian Chairmanship** and Mr. **Igor Zorčič, President of the Slovene National Assembly** for the kind invitation and for organizing such a successful Conference, which brings the contribution of Parliaments to Regional Cooperation in the Adriatic and Ionian Region to a higher level.

Let me also thank the President of the Republic of Slovenia, H.E. **Borut Pahor**, and the members of the Slovenian Government who are present with us today.

I wish a special welcome to the delegation from the **Grand and General Council of the Republic of San Marino**, which became a full member of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative in 2019, and today they are participating in this type of meeting for the first time ever. I am positive that San Marino will join soon the EUSAIR strategy, with the adoption of the Izola Declaration in May.

For more than 20 year of its existence, this Initiative has significantly contributed to building trust, intensifying cooperation, integrating and adopting European values and standards.

The **Parliamentary Dimension** is a fundamental asset for the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative. A **strict cooperation among Parliaments** gives indeed added value in the effort to upgrade regional cooperation and to make the AII and the EUSAIR instruments to get South Eastern

Europe and the Western Balkans **again at the heart of European policy**, where they deserve to be.

In this regard, I can assure you that the All and its Permanent Secretariat will continue to be an essential tool for fostering regional cooperation **by further enhancing policy dialogue and cooperation among the ten All Participating Countries**.

We will continue to support the **European integration aspirations of the Western Balkan countries, supporting candidate and potential candidate countries in their bid for accession in the European Union**.

I am convinced that with synchronised actions, we can create a prosperous region, attractive for investments and opportunities that will provide economic and social growth and support the integration of the Western Balkans into the European Union.

National Parliaments can play a decisive role in facilitating the implementation of the EUSAIR Strategy. You are the **closest link to citizens and to the electoral body** - the real targets and beneficiaries of every regional cooperation action in line with the **subsidiarity principle**, which is at the base of the EUSAIR, making sure that the benefits become a reality.

Being the All-PS both an intergovernmental organization and a full member of the EUSAIR Governing Board, the All Permanent Secretariat is in a privileged position **to support the role of the Parliaments within the framework of the EUSAIR**.

In this context, I appreciate very much your choice to focus on “**younger generations**” which is at the heart of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative precisely because it is impossible to devise actions, projects, initiatives on our common region without taking into account the needs and the future perspectives of young people.

The Permanent Secretariat is working hard on **concrete opportunities** for young people and students, **from scholarships to university courses, from internships to projects for high school students**.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning the strict and fruitful cooperation with the **Fora of Civil Society** - Chambers of Commerce, Cities and Universities - with whom the Permanent Secretariat closely cooperates for the successful realization of these initiatives, with a **bottom-up approach**, essential for each and every macroregional Strategy.

Along the same lines, I wish to inform you that the collaboration with the **Central European Initiative** is producing concrete results, contributing to fostering regional cooperation and sustainable development.

It is exactly within this framework that the Permanent Secretariat realized together with the Executive Secretariat of the Central European Initiative, and also with the valuable support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 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 support of All Parliaments is crucial in this moment. In fact, in a few weeks the sixth **EUSAIR Forum will take place in Izola (11-12 May, online)** together with the Adriatic and Ionian Council (All highest-level body gathering ten Ministers of Foreign Affairs).

The **Izola Declaration** is now being finalized and being **Young People** a priority for the Slovenian Chairmanship its will certainly be reflected in the Declaration.

Concluding, the All Permanent Secretariat has the ambition to support all the activities of the ten All government and parliamentary bodies, Presidency and technical committees.

I wish you a successful work and I am looking forward to the discussion that will follow.

THANK YOU