



**REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
CROATIAN PARLIAMENT**



**ADRIATIC AND IONIAN INITIATIVE
CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE
REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

**XIV CONFERENCE
OF SPEAKERS OF PARLIAMENTS
OF THE ADRIATIC AND IONIAN INITIATIVE
Split, 15-16 April 2016**

JOINT STATEMENT

The XIV Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative was held in Split on 15-16 April 2016, under the chairmanship of the Speaker of the Croatian Parliament Željko REINER, MD, PhD.

The Conference was attended by: the Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Albania Mr Ilir META, the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina Mr Mladen BOSIĆ, the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina Ms Borjana KRIŠTO, the Deputy Speaker of the House of Peoples of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina Mr Bariša ČOLAK, the Speaker of the Croatian Parliament Željko REINER MD, PhD, the Deputy Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament Mr Georgios VAREMENOS, the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Republic Ms Laura BOLDRINI, Member of the Senate of the Italian Republic Mr Lodovico SONEGO, the Speaker of the Parliament of Montenegro Mr Ranko KRIVOKAPIĆ and the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia Mr Milan BRGLEZ.

Participants were addressed by the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia Mr Miro KOVAČ, Member of the European Parliament Ms Ivana MALETIĆ and the Secretary General of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative Ambassador Fabio PIGLIAPOCO.

After exchanging views on: i) the contribution of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative participating countries to the comprehensive European response to the migration crisis and ii) the added value of parliamentary cooperation in the framework of the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), the participants issued the following Joint Statement:

We, the participants of the XIV Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative held in Split on 15-16 April 2016;

GUIDED by the Ancona Declaration as the founding political document of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative and its basic principles;

CONSIDERING the commitments made during the last conference of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative Parliamentary Dimension in Neum, Bosnia and Herzegovina (22-23 April 2015), as well as during previous conferences of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative Parliamentary

Dimension;

CONFIRMING that the European Union's values are the basic principles of cooperation among the countries of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative;

WELCOMING the Council's Conclusions from 15 December 2015 on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process which reiterated the European Union's univocal commitment to the European perspective of the Stabilisation and Association Process countries;

EMPHASISING that cooperation in the framework of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative is essential for further developing peace, stability and prosperity in this region and for further anchoring EU Candidate and Potential Candidate Countries on the path towards EU integration; in this regard warmly welcoming the application of Bosnia and Herzegovina for European Union membership on 15 February 2016; expressing the willingness of EU members states to share their experience in EU accession oriented reforms;

CONVINCED that the full-fledged participation on an equal footing of AII Participating Countries which are Candidate and Potential Candidate Countries in the European Union Strategy for Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) will further pave the way for EU integration;

Contribution of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative participating countries to the comprehensive European response to the migration crisis:

ACKNOWLEDGE that Europe is facing the most severe refugee and migration crisis since World War II, which was triggered by the conflict and crisis in Syria, but also by wars and human rights violations in other countries in Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia. Trends in demographics, climate change, poverty and the globalisation of transport and communication have also played a role in the increase in migration flows to Europe;

HIGHLIGHT that the issue of mixed migratory flows is multifaceted and includes: the human and moral imperative of saving human lives at sea, respecting the EU's obligations towards asylum seekers, according to European and international law, strengthening the legal framework for entering the EU, consolidation of the EU's asylum system, implementation of all relevant decisions including on relocation, returns and resettlement, enhancement of the management of the EU's external border, the effective fight against trafficking and smuggling of human beings as a serious form of organised crime and the fight against causes of migration as part of a sustainable solution;

UNDERLINE that European migration and asylum policies must comply with the full implementation of all the principles of EU's founding Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, striking the right balance between security and freedom;

CALL attention in this regard to the fact that all asylum seekers should be treated on the basis of their individual circumstances, equally, openly and fairly in a tolerant and non-discriminatory way, and that by protecting their fundamental human rights, the European Union protects its own fundamental values;

WELCOME the commitment of the European Union to find a systematic and sustainable solution to the refugee and migration crisis, taking a holistic approach in all measures and

priority actions of its Agenda on Migration and the Agenda on Security;

WELCOME the comprehensive strategy to tackle the refugee and migration crisis agreed by the European Council in December 2015 and reconfirmed at the European Council meeting in March 2016, which created a common European response so as to help tackling the crisis appropriately, promptly, efficiently, responsibly and with solidarity, to end divisions within Europe and to restore a European consensus;

ALSO WELCOME the recent proposals put forward by the European Commission to reform the Common European Asylum System to ensure greater burden-sharing;

HIGHLIGHT the fact that greater efforts on the part of the international community and of the European Union are needed to address the root causes of population movements by striving to end conflicts, strengthening institutions in countries undergoing democratic transitions and tackling poverty;

SUPPORT all actions agreed thus far aiming to build a sustainable system of migration management in Europe, in particular those with the objective to regain control of European external borders as well as those regarding the relocation, resettlement and returns of asylum seekers and refugees, and encourage EU member states to fully and rapidly implement them whilst fully respecting human rights and international law, including the principle of *non-refoulement*;

CALL for the use of all means to support the capacity of Greece, including emergency support and bilateral humanitarian assistance, in order to help cope with the serious humanitarian situation;

STRESS that strong and dedicated support of the European Union has to continuously be offered to Greece and Italy which are the EU member states most exposed to immigration pressures;

ENCOURAGE EU member states to continue close cooperation and coordination in regard to this matter with the concerned non-EU countries and to provide all necessary assistance;

ENCOURAGE EU institutions, EU member states and the affected non-member states to take full advantage of their cooperation with international organizations and their specialized agencies, particularly the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe;

EMPHASISE the need for the European Union and other concerned countries to be vigilant in regard to possible new routes for irregular migrants, take any measures that may become necessary in that respect, and intensify the fight against smugglers;

Added value of parliamentary cooperation in the framework of the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)

EXPRESS belief that the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) will give further impetus to cooperation in all areas of common interest, as well as to peace and security in the entire Adriatic and Ionian Region; the intergovernmental and parliamentary activities carried out by the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative can contribute to this goal;

REFER to the Council's Conclusions from 15 October 2013 on the added value of macro-regional strategies which recognize the parliamentary dimension as an important link between macro-regional strategies and society as a whole, at the regional, national and European levels;

INVITE the representatives of national parliaments and other involved actors to strengthen the activities aimed at raising visibility and ownership of the EUSAIR;

EMPHASISE that citizens should be intensively involved in implementing the EUSAIR and that parliaments and their representatives should be mediators between citizens and governments in achieving the objectives of the EUSAIR;

CALL on the representatives of national parliaments to intensify efforts to raise awareness among their respective constituencies about specific projects within the framework of the EUSAIR which citizens can directly benefit from;

UNDERLINE that the Adriatic and Ionian Region has great potential for cooperation in all areas that are important for economic growth and prosperity;

REMINDE that the EUSAIR offers a single framework for the preparation and implementation of common projects, financed from the European structural and investment funds and other financial sources, which could contribute to better transport and energy connections, closer maritime cooperation, development of innovative, sustainable and responsible tourism, protection of cultural heritage and environment, as well as improve the business environment and strengthen the competitiveness of the maritime economy in the Adriatic and Ionian Region;

WELCOME the 1st Forum of the European Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region which will be held in Dubrovnik, Croatia, on 12 and 13 May 2016 and during which a dual structure ministerial meeting of the Adriatic and Ionian Council and the EUSAIR will be held;

WELCOME the decision of the XIII Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative in Neum, Bosnia and Herzegovina, (22-23 April 2015) to create a senior parliamentary officials' network aimed at facilitating a permanent exchange of information and experiences among the parliaments on EUSAIR issues; in this regard welcome the invitation of the Croatian co-presidency of the EUSAIR Governing Board to senior parliamentary officials to participate at the 1st EUSAIR Forum which will be held in Dubrovnik, Croatia;

THANK Croatia for a constructive and productive Chairmanship of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative and Co-presidency of the EUSAIR Governing Board;

WISH success to the Greece in its mission as the upcoming Chairmanship of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative and in effectively leading the EUSAIR for the benefit of all countries of the Adriatic and Ionian Region.
