

**High level stakeholder conference "Setting an Agenda for Smart,
Sustainable and Inclusive Growth from the Adriatic and Ionian Seas"
Zagreb, 6 December 2012**

Zagreb Conclusions

Further to the discussions held during the high level conference "Setting an Agenda for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth from the Adriatic and Ionian Seas", which saw the participation of authorities and stakeholders from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia

The participants:

1. Welcome the Communication of the European Commission on "A Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas" as a relevant framework driving concrete cooperation in maritime affairs forward and appreciate that the Commission has proposed the strategy.

2. Reaffirm that the maritime strategy is intended as the first thematic component of an EU macro-regional strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian area, which will cover also issues not directly related to the sea and for which the involved States are committed to achieving the European Council's mandate in December 2012.

3. Confirm the focus on generating direct and indirect growth and employment through innovation in new and established maritime sectors, achieving and maintaining good environmental status of the sea, a safer and more secure sea, as well as long term sustainable and responsible fisheries resources management; reiterate the support to the four priority areas as identified in the above-mentioned Communication, corresponding to these objectives. In particular, acknowledge the need to:

- Create the conditions for innovation in the maritime economy by increasing the links between research and development and by addressing the skill needs of workforce. To this effect, support the creation of clustering activities and smart infrastructure.
- Optimise and increase sustainable sea-borne connections in order to strengthen social and commercial links among Adriatic and Ionian countries; encourage ports to exchange practices for their sustainable development and to enhance their efficiency; stress the particular relevance of ensuring sustainable development of islands through good connectivity links and their economic development which would greatly contribute to reversing the current trend of depopulation of islands.
- Develop exchange of good practices, know-how and monitoring; propose solutions for further sustainable development of tourism and connected activities in coastal and maritime areas as well as those having an impact on hinterland; recognize the role of cultural and natural heritage and the importance of its protection in increasing the

attractiveness of tourism areas thus extending the tourism season and benefits of tourism on local economies including the inland areas; strive to create common itineraries as basis for one possible future marketing activities at the distant markets.

- Ensure that exploitation of the economic potential of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas is consistent with a healthy and productive marine environment, which is in turn the precondition for many economic activities. To this effect, ensure a common approach and comparable data at the sea-basin level to implement or prepare the implementation of EU legislation, notably the Marine Strategy Framework Directive; devise initiatives and seek for support and involvement from all countries to tackle challenges specifically important for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, such as marine litter and risk of oil spills. Express readiness to continue the joint efforts towards the designation of the Adriatic Sea as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA), in accordance with the IMO Guidelines.
- Put in place initiatives for a safer and more secure maritime space, as fundamental precondition for the development of economic activities such as tourism and transport and as a guarantee of effective commercial and social connections across the region. To this effect, continue exploring the possibility of upgrading the traffic information exchange in the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, ensuring full consistency with the existing EU framework.
- Support competitiveness of fisheries activities and particularly the aquaculture sector, making seafood businesses more competitive, innovative and capable of adapting to market needs; engage to identify research topics and carry out joint research initiatives to ensure that the development of aquaculture continues to follow the lines of good practice and environmental sustainability and increases its importance in local economies; Foster innovations in marine aquaculture and adding value in its products.
- Enhance efforts towards long-term sustainable and responsible fisheries which must provide an economic resource for coastal areas and its inhabitants, in particular based on:
 - effective implementation of the principles of the reformed CFP;
 - cooperation on scientific issues for the fisheries management on the regional and sea-basin level, such as the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean and FAO regional projects (Adriamed and Eastmed).

4. Commit to play an active role in the upcoming phase of elaborating an Action Plan. Recognize that the maritime strategy will be an action-oriented policy and that the Action Plan will be the main tool for its implementation. Such Action Plan will define common priority areas, actions and projects meant to achieve the objectives identified in the Communication.

5. Engage to ensure that all governance levels – public and private - will be adequately involved in the elaboration of the Maritime Action Plan and called upon them to contribute to its implementation by strengthening cross-border and regional networks, avoiding duplication and facilitating possible synergies with existing Adriatic and Ionian regional cooperation initiatives.

6. Call on European Institutions to ensure their political support and their input to the elaboration of the Action Plan. Look forward to working in close consultation with the relevant Services of the Commission, in order to timely develop and monitor a sustainable Plan of Action.

7. Highlight the importance of attracting and coordinating all available sources of funding – from EU programmes and instruments, International Financial Institutions, national, regional and local resources as well as private investors – in order to match the objectives identified with adequate funding opportunities.

8. Regard EU strategies as new, innovative ways to handle an increasingly diverse EU and foster cooperation amongst partner countries in sea basins and invite EU Member States to support this initiative for the Adriatic and Ionian seas region.