

## ***Joint Declaration***

The third meeting of the Coordination Committee of Ministers was held in Rome on 18 January 2018, on the basis of the Memorandum on Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Government of the Italian Republic, signed in Zagreb on 12 January 2009.

In line with the scope of this Memorandum to expand the cooperation between the two States to others fields of interest, Croatia and Italy welcomed the participation in this third meeting of the Ministries of Interior and of the Ministries responsible for Tourism.

The two Sides had fruitful talks – in a constructive and friendly atmosphere – with the aim of enhancing political, economic, cross-border and interregional cooperation. Since the previous meeting of the Coordination Committee, held in Zagreb in 2010, Croatia, with full support from Italy, has acceded to the European Union in 2013. The two Countries now share a common path within the EU and confirm their common engagement - in line with the Rome Declaration on the Future of Europe - to work towards a safe and secure Europe, a prosperous and sustainable Europe, a social Europe and a stronger Europe on the global scene. The two Sides are committed to intensifying their consultations on different EU policy areas, and to exploring further the possibilities of cooperation within the EU institutions, particularly within the Council of the EU, also in view of the Croatian EU Presidency in 2020.

Recognizing that very good bilateral relations have been further strengthened, reaching excellent levels of cooperation, and are characterized by a very intensive political dialogue, the two Sides underlined their mutual, historic friendship and solid partnership. Croatia and Italy commit themselves to further intensify bilateral dialogue at high political level and to continue regular consultations on issues of common interest.

Reaffirming the key role played by autochthonous Italian and Croatian national minorities living in Croatia and Italy and providing a fundamental contribution to the social, cultural, and economic development of each Country, Croatia and Italy welcomed the recent measures taken in favour of the Croatian minority in the Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia. Furthermore, Croatian Side welcomes allocation of the financial funds designated to solve the infrastructural problems (mainly roads) in the Molise Region in the area where the Croatian linguistic minority lives.

Confirming their commitment to further guarantee protection, inclusion and empowerment of the rights of respective ethnic communities, in accordance with national, European and international laws, Croatia and Italy took positive note of the important progress made so far and encourage further progress in enhancing their legal and financial status. The two Sides promote the strengthening of cultural cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Government of the Italian Republic in the wake of the Executive Programme of cooperation in the fields of culture and education for the years 2015-2019.

### **Regional and multilateral/global cooperation**

Recalling the Conclusions of the European Council of 9 March 2017, as well as the Final Declaration of the Trieste Summit, adopted in the framework of the Western Balkans Process, Croatia and Italy reaffirmed their unequivocal support to the European future of the Western Balkans.

Believing that the integration of the Western Balkans countries to the European Union is instrumental and necessary in order to provide stability to Europe as a whole, the two sides called on all actors involved to step up reform efforts in the region, and stressed the importance that the Strategy on enlargement - that will be published by the EU Commission on February 2018 - is framed as an ambitious and inclusive document, providing a decisive step in this direction. Croatia and Italy also stressed the need for the Western Balkans Countries to promote reconciliation and genuine good neighbourly relations; to engage in meaningful cooperation in the region; and to fulfil all EU accession related criteria and benchmarks. Croatia and Italy pointed out that merit based and individual approach is the best way to preserve the credibility of the Enlargement and in that sense the fulfilment of criteria and implementation of the reforms remain essential.

The two sides confirmed their commitment to the region through the Adriatic Ionian Initiative (AII), the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region (EUSAIR) and all other relevant regional organizations, underlining their important role in the common endeavour towards the European perspective and the stabilization of the region. A special mention was made to the Central European Initiative, since Croatia and Italy will hold the Presidency of the CEI respectively in 2018 and 2019, thus opening the possibility for a common effort in reinforcing and relaunching the action and the activities of this Initiative.

Aware of the importance of cooperation of coastal countries of the Mediterranean Sea and the Adriatic Sea, the two sides also expressed their commitment to continuous bilateral cooperation and cooperation with other coastal states of the Adriatic Sea in the field of marine environmental protection, marine spatial planning, maritime safety and security and other marine related issues.

Croatia is a candidate country for the accession to the OECD membership and looks forward to starting the relevant process in 2018 or 2019. Italy looks favorably on the further enlargement of the OECD membership, recognizes the merits of Croatia's candidacy and agrees that Croatia's accession would help accelerate the domestic reform agenda, necessary to improve the overall economy and the standard of its citizens, with positive implications also for security, stability and prosperity of the wider South-East Europe region.

### **Migration and reform of the Dublin system**

Italy recognises the significant progress Croatia made in preparation for Schengen accession and strongly supports the full and swift extension of the Schengen zone of the free movement on Croatia. Freedom of circulation is one of the founding values of the EU and, as such, it should be extended to all members States, bearing in mind that a clear distinction exists between migration and security issues when dealing with the improvement of the Schengen regulation. Both sides recognize the important role Croatia and Italy have in securing the EU's external borders of the EU and combating illegal migrations and all other forms of organized illegal activities.

Croatia and Italy are committed to cooperating in order to find common solutions to the migratory challenge, and they support a coherent implementation of the principles of solidarity and of shared responsibility.

They promote the principle of a common responsibility in managing the migratory flows in order to ensure a safe and orderly migration, and in protecting people on the move, migrants and refugees, in particular the most vulnerable ones, such as women and unaccompanied minors, children, pregnant women and elderly people. They are committed to cooperating in fighting smuggling and human trafficking.

Croatia and Italy value the positive aspects of a safe and orderly human mobility and therefore they promote the economic integration and social inclusion of migrants in their countries.

They also believe that the first, positive developments of the external dimension of EU migration policy cannot in any case undermine the effort to build a new and fair Common European Asylum System (CEAS), based on the effective respect of the principles of responsibility and solidarity. Croatia and Italy acknowledge that there are different visions on the way to reform the CEAS, and stress the need for a solution that can reach a broad consensus among all the Member States. Croatia and Italy will continue to cooperate on the transfer of third-country nationals in accordance with the Dublin system and on the basis of the readmission agreement of persons in an irregular situation in force between the two Countries, signed in Rome in 1997.

The normal functioning of the Schengen area should be re-established in full, while several tools – different from systematic internal border controls – can be used in order to deal with security issues in the EU.

### **Economic and trade relations**

The two Sides made reference to the ambitious reform plans launched by their respective governments and their positive impact on economic growth and the development of a business climate more favorable to trade and investment.

The two Sides exchanged views on their current economic scenarios and expressed satisfaction for their excellent economic relations and the investment environment.

At the same time, the two Sides acknowledged that there is a great potential for further growth and diversification of bilateral trade.

Furthermore, Croatia and Italy agreed on the importance of economic and commercial cooperation and expressed their commitment to ensuring all necessary support to further increase trade and investment flows, also through their involvement in key infrastructure projects.

Both Sides recognized the benefits of intensifying mutual direct investments and therefore encouraged their investment promotion entities to explore ways of closer cooperation and organization of joint events promoting investment opportunities in both countries.

Both Sides emphasized the importance of increasing industrial cooperation and encouraged their respective private sectors to explore opportunities in: machinery for food and wood processing; production of parts for the automotive industry; shipbuilding industry; production of naval equipment and of railways vehicles; implementation of ICT services and software development.

Both Sides expressed interest in developing cooperation within SME's sector, particularly within Cooperative-based entrepreneurship significantly developed in Italy.

Both Sides stressed the importance of information exchange with regard to opportunities for bilateral cooperation and to the development of reform plans implemented in both Countries, and acknowledged the usefulness of encouraging the use of the financial instruments made available by the two Governments.

Both Croatia and Italy have offshore installations for the extraction of natural gas in the Adriatic Sea and guided by the provisions of the Directive 2013/30/EU. The two Sides wish to strengthen their collaboration and coordination in the field of offshore safety aiming at developing integrated systems and monitoring methodologies in the Adriatic-Ionian area, and decommissioning and reuse of offshore platforms that have finished or are ending the useful life of the geological reservoir.

Croatia appreciates Italian support for the development of the Ionian-Adriatic Pipeline (IAP) project, as a link to the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP).

The Croatian side informed the Italian side on the status of the LNG Croatia project development.

### **Research and education**

Croatia and Italy are convinced of the importance of improving cooperation in the areas of higher education and mobility, in order to strengthen the role of the northern Adriatic area as a European Hub for higher education and research in light of the processes of the Alpine and Adriatic and Ionian macro regions. The two Sides recognized the role of the International Center of Theoretical Physics (ICTP) in Trieste, a United Nations Center funded over 80% by Italy, as a fundamental catalyst for research and education in the northern Adriatic area, but also the importance of the Central European Initiative (CEI) based in Trieste.

Recalling the Bilateral Agreement on cooperation in Science and Technology, signed in Rome on October 29, 1999, Croatia and Italy reaffirmed their continuing commitment to strengthening cooperation and collaboration also in S&T, in the framework of the EU Research and Innovation program Horizon 2020, and to support the scientific and technical operations of CERIC-ERIC (Central European Research Infrastructure Consortium).

To increase the prosperity and the blue growth potential of the area by stimulating cross-border partnerships able to achieve tangible changes, the two Sides will encourage through the ITALY CROATIA CBC Programme 2014-2020 cross-border cooperation among the territories of the two Countries overlooking the Adriatic Sea (8 Croatian counties and 25 Italian provinces).

Furthermore, the two Countries agreed to advance the cooperation within the Erasmus+ Programme, promoting direct agreements between their respective education institutions, in order to increase mobility at all levels. They will especially foster the teaching of language, literature and culture of the other Party by exchanging lecturers of language of the other country at their universities on the basis of reciprocity.

### **Agriculture and fisheries**

The two Sides decided to strengthen their cooperation also in agriculture and fisheries. In particular, the Parties discussed about the future reform of the CAP, following the European Commission Communication of 29 November 2017. Croatia and Italy reaffirmed their interest to maintain a strong CAP, with appropriate resources and instruments. The future CAP should be simpler, allowing for more flexibility and subsidiarity by Member States. It should also be more sustainable from a social, economic and environmental point of view. In particular, it should ensure a quality food production and an adequate income for farmers (by enhancing their role within the food chain); a management of natural resources able to assure the production of public goods and to fight

climate change; a reinforcement of the risks management tools; a territorial development sensitive to socio-economic and environmental balances.

The Parties also affirmed their interest to develop an effective management of fisheries in the Adriatic Sea, also developing common activities within the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean. The need to intensify the cooperation among the two administrations within the framework of the ADRIATICA forum has been stressed with a particular focus to develop common position on the issue of the management of the small pelagics in the Adriatic under the scope of the EU Multiannual plan. Having said this, both countries are rather critical to introduction of the system of total allowable catches and notably express their opposition. Management of small pelagic stocks is a crucial segment in national fisheries of both countries and they have agreed that it is in their common interest that multiannual plan for small pelagic fishery needs to be made with realistic goals using feasible and effective measures.

It was also recognized that further strengthening of cooperation in the scientific field, would be welcome, particularly with respect to improve common monitoring standards and joint monitoring schemes for all resources and areas of key importance for fisheries of both countries. The bilateral cooperation on the issue of protection of the Jabuka/Pomo Pit has been acknowledged as a very successful and promising model of collaboration with the need to continue and upgrade the existing collaboration in the scientific monitoring as well as in segment of management. The parties discussed also about illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and agreed on the reinforcement of controls. Furthermore, the Parties discussed a Partnership project promoted by the Italian regions Friuli Venezia Giulia and Emilia Romagna with the aim to explore the possibilities of collaboration in the area of fisheries, to be financed by the Interreg program.

The Italian part informed about the activities in the field of fisheries to be performed under its Presidency of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative / EUSAIR, and namely its intention to organize in 2018 an all roundtable on Maritime Security & Blue Growth.

The Parties, acknowledging the importance to ensure a stronger protection of quality wines and agro-foodstuffs, in order to guarantee both consumers' confidence and safeguard of such products as part of the Intellectual Property Rights and living cultural and gastronomic heritage of the EU, affirmed their commitment to enhance their cooperation between the responsible Competent Authorities in the framework of Reg. EC No 555/2008(Wine sector), Reg. EU No 1151/2012 ( PDO and PGI agro-foodstuffs), Reg. EC No 834/2007 (on organic production and labelling of organic products with laying down detailed rules - Reg. EC No 889/2008 and Reg. EU No 203/2012) and Reg. EU No 1169/2011 (on the provision of food information to consumers) by organizing study visits and workshops.

## **Environment**

Croatia and Italy consider environmental cooperation a key element of their relation. Both Countries fully support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and Paris Agreement on climate change, both at the EU level and at the international level. Croatia and Italy also confirm their full support to strengthen regional and sub-regional cooperation on the marine environment through the Barcelona Convention and other relevant regional organizations.

Croatia and Italy express interest in regional cooperation and, if appropriate, consultations between Member States on Integrated Energy Climate Plans in accordance with Article 11 of the New Governance Regulation (not yet in force) together with the exchange of views and experiences in the process of its adoption.

Both Sides confirmed the high political value of their technical cooperation in the context of the Twinning Project on capacity building to prevent major accident hazards involving dangerous substances, in line with the “Seveso Directives”.

Sharing the responsibility for the protection of the Adriatic Sea, seen as a common heritage from the natural, cultural and economic point of view, Croatia and Italy being the Adriatic Sea coastal states with the longest coastlines, are determined to strengthen their bilateral cooperation and cooperation with other coastal states in addressing relevant issues such as

- Issue of ship's ballast waters and implementation of the BWM Convention with emphasis on the same risk area concept in the Adriatic Sea;
- Re-actualization of the initiative to designate the Adriatic Sea as the Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) with identification of measures;
- Issue of developing joint/coordinated area based protection measure on the marine environment, to contribute to achieve Aichi target 11 and SDG 14.

Croatia and Italy, aware of the strategic importance of coastal areas for the sustainable development of their country, agree to strengthen their cooperation to ensure an effective integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) and marine spatial planning (MSP), with the aim to promote environmental protection and blue growth.

The two Sides shall enhance activities in cooperation with other Adriatic coastal states to prevent land and ship source litter pollution in the Adriatic Sea, in particular marine litter and microplastic.

Croatia and Italy will continue with cooperation based on the 1974 Agreement on Cooperation for the Protection of the Waters of the Adriatic Sea and Coastal Zones from pollution and will join efforts in order for the Joint Commission for the Protection of the Adriatic Sea to continue with its work. The emphasis will be put on the update of the Commission's work to ensure the execution of the EU MFSD second implementation cycle. The MFSD requires a sub-regional approach in relation to the beginning of the implementation or revision of the marine strategy preparatory documents.

Republic of Croatia reiterates the invitation to Italy to ratify the Sub Regional Contingency Plan for the Prevention of, Preparedness for and Response to Major Marine Pollution Incidents in the Adriatic Sea.

Croatia and Italy will also strengthen their cooperation, including through the development of common projects, in the context of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and of the Barcelona Convention and other relevant regional organizations as well as the outreach to other non-EU partners in Adriatic.

In the field of nature protection, Croatia and Italy will continue scientific and expert cooperation, and work on establishing joint population management on monitoring and evaluation of the presence of whales (Cetacea) and sea turtles in the Adriatic Sea, in the context of relevant international and regional organization, including ACCOBAMS.

## **Tourism**

Croatia and Italy stressed the importance of tourism for both countries and for the economic growth, employment, social and cultural integration, as well. In 2016, the tourism sector contributed by 10.2% to the EU GDP and supported 26.5 million jobs, which represents a 1.6% growth from 2015.

Recalling the Bilateral Agreement on cooperation in tourism, signed in Rome on June 27, 1997, and wishing to further develop tourism activities between the two Countries, the two Sides agreed to stimulate the development of individual and organized travels and a wider distribution of visitors to the various destinations and attractions in each Country. In that sense both sides agreed more frequent maritime connections should be envisaged between the two countries as they will contribute to tourist flow growth.

To foster cooperation in the field of tourism promotion, the two Sides will encourage the organization of workshops, with the aim of expanding direct contacts between Italian and Croat tourism stakeholders, and assembling "ad hoc" travel packages. They will also encourage the organization of events promoting various tourism products, namely cultural tourism, and the participation in exhibitions, congress, tourism fairs and other promotional activities.

Both Sides will intensify cooperation between their administrative structures as well, with the aim to start training programs in tourism management to the benefit of public officials.

Furthermore, Croatia and Italy expressed the intention - through the platforms of the Adriatic and Ionian Macro-Region, namely the EUSAIR strategy, and through UNWTO - to make sure that tourism policy is firmly oriented towards the preservation, conservation and enhancement of natural and cultural diversity and heritage, in general.

As the tourism sector currently faces also a number of development needs and challenges especially from various "threats" such as climate changes, natural disaster, earthquakes, financial crises, migration, there is a growing need for rapid reactions and cooperation, especially among neighbouring countries. In this sense, it is necessary to strengthen the position of tourism at the European level through cooperation within international and regional organization, initiatives and working groups.

The two Countries agreed to advance the cooperation and address the main challenges for tourism industry. Growing demand for customised experiences and for new tourism products is possible to solve through strengthening and further development of tourism of special interests (eco - tourism, cycling, cultural, gastro, congress, health, etc.), as well as through quality education of tourism staff and following IT development trends, that will all at the same time help alleviate high seasonality.

The two Countries concluded that establishing even more public-private partnerships and inter-regional and inter-sectorial cooperation along the travel and tourism chain is important for better using of current and future EU funds which prioritize fulfilling horizontal policy objectives and sustainability of investments.

## **Transport**

Croatia and Italy are committed to enhancing the mutual cooperation in the maritime sector, namely to promote the development of the ports of both Countries.

Croatia and Italy are engaged to examine all possible forms of collaboration in order to develop an efficient network between ports (in Croatia, Split, Ploče and Šibenik; in Italy, the North Adriatic ports of Trieste, Venezia, Ancona and Ravenna).

The parties are committed to extension of transport corridors in the interest of intensification of transport in the Adriatic Sea:

- Extension of the Adriatic-Baltic Core Network Corridor to the port of Rijeka on the Croatian side and extension of the above mentioned Core Network Corridor from Ravenna to Bari on the Italian side;
- Extension of the Mediterranean Core Network Corridor to the port of Ploče;
- Extension of the Mediterranean Core Network Corridor through the Lika railway section enabling TEN T core connections with port of Šibenik, Zadar and Split.

Both sides agree that the extension of transport corridors should enable reaffirmation of the short sea shipping and integration of *maritime legs* of transport corridors.

The Parties are also committed to exploring any possible synergies and to set up joint cooperation projects in the field of Coast Guard Functions.

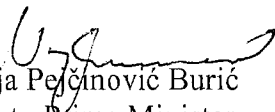
Croatia and Italy underlined the importance of transport connections for freights and passengers in the Adriatic region. Both Sides will cooperate on future extension of the TEN-T (Trans-European Transport Network) to the Western Balkans, in particular on future extension of the Mediterranean corridor, in line with the general objective of TEN-T that aims to establish a single trans-European multimodal network to integrate road, rail, sea and air transport, enabling goods and people to travel quickly and easily between the Member States. They reaffirmed their engagement to enhance port and inter-modality infrastructures as a priority for developing an efficient network of transnational infrastructures, boosting the economic cooperation and the cohesion of the macro-region and facilitating tourist traffic and cruise shipping, on the basis of sustainable transport plans. Both Countries support the development of a Masterplan for transport infrastructures, using the platforms of the Adriatic and Ionian Macro-Region – namely the EUSAIR Strategy – and the South-East Europe Transport Observatory (SEETO) to identify strategic, innovative and sustainable projects, aimed at connecting the macro-region with the rest of the EU and third Countries, creating new jobs and employment, expanding economic opportunities and prosperity.

Croatia and Italy are committed to exploring opportunities in terms of cooperation in the railway sector. In the field of high speed, both Countries will promote discussions and meetings in order to further enhance the implementation of concrete projects.

Within the framework of the European Union, Croatia and Italy will promote a regular debate on the most important issues regarding the Mobility Package and Aviation package.

Rome, 18<sup>th</sup> January 2018

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