

ADDRESS

BY THE MFA SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AT THE WORKSHOP ON THE MARITIME STRAND OF THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE ADRIATIC-IONIAN REGION

(ATHENS, 14.2.2012)

Distinguished guests,

It is a particular honour for me to address this conference, which is organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic in cooperation with the European Commission. Our conference is the first in a series of workshops, with additional events to follow in Italy and Slovenia. The high level of expertise gathered today at this meeting creates a promising environment that should help us achieve a concrete outcome in the

form of agreed elements for a Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region.

The Hellenic Republic has repeatedly proven its readiness to cooperate with the European Commission and neighbouring states in order to pursue a common vision for the development of our region. This common vision is, of course, based on the promotion of mutually-beneficial economic ties and projects, thus also hopefully making a significant contribution to current efforts to overcome the repercussions of the international financial crisis, not to mention helping to pave the way to the accession to the EU of the Western Balkan countries. The time has come to put together and discuss specific ideas that can be transformed into concrete projects.

The Maritime Strand of the Adriatic-Ionian Development Strategy focuses, in the main, on the sea; but it also affects, and depends on, the hinterland, where important factors of regional growth are located. Therefore, it would be wise if our proposals, ideas and projects were to extend to, and integrate, all the necessary, linked, inland infrastructures so as to make best use of the supporting facilities, amenities and resources available therein.

In our quest for effectiveness we rely on consensus and swiftness. From this point of view, the Maritime Strand is based on the experience of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative. The latter, being a framework for informal cooperation between eight countries with common regional development goals,

has proven that the rule of consensus can be a vehicle for, rather than an impediment to, immediate action.

The main themes of our workshop today actually represent real challenges awaiting our response. We need to protect and develop *fisheries* in the context of safeguarding our resources for the future. This is linked to our continuous concern and respect for the *marine environment*, which in turn is the basis for *blue growth*. *Maritime safety and security* should be examined closely not only as an economic, but also as a social framework for our endeavours. And in this way I have just enumerated the four themes of our four roundtables.

I am confident that success in our actions is guaranteed if we work closely together and try to

agree on projects beneficial for all Adriatic-Ionian countries without exclusion. It is in this frame of mind, in this spirit, that Greece, together with its partner countries in the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, is doing its best for the successful establishment of the Adriatic-Ionian Macro-region in the wider framework of the European Union. Judging from the quality of the cooperation we have experienced in this region in the past, I am quite confident today that our conference will succeed in further contributing new ideas and proposals – thanks also to the prior existence of a well-cultivated and fertile ground.

Thank you.