

### *Joint Declaration*

The Republic of Croatia and the Italian Republic held the fourth meeting of the Coordination Committee of Ministers on 30 November 2020 in Zagreb with the aim of further enhancing political, economic, cross-border and interregional cooperation. To this end, the two sides commit to intensify bilateral dialogue on high political and working levels. Bilateral cooperation will be enhanced also through Interreg Cross-border Programme 2021-2027.

As Croatia and Italy are considering the possibility to proclaim their Exclusive Economic Zones in the Adriatic Sea in accordance with relevant provisions of UNCLOS, they expressed their intention to open negotiations on the delimitation of the respective maritime zones.

The two sides underlined the important role played by the autochthonous Croatian and Italian minorities living in Italy and in Croatia and their contribution to the cultural development and economic growth of the area. The two sides confirmed their commitment to support further progress in implementing national, European and international laws, to the benefit of both minorities.

Italy and Croatia are shocked at the terrorist attacks in France and Austria, and condemn all forms of radicalism and violence. They stand together in the joint desire to make Europe safe and secure while protecting the European way of life as one of the most important achievement in building our common project. Both countries share the vision of a secure, prosperous, competitive and socially responsible European Union. They share the importance of making full use of the “Next Generation EU” recovery instrument so to bolster stronger economic growth of the Union and its Member States, based on green and digital transformation, together with a coordinated approach to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemics, and close collaboration in development and distribution of vaccines, medicines and new therapies.

Italy welcomed Croatia’s entry into the Exchange Rate Mechanism II, which is an important step in joining the Euro zone.

The two sides agreed on having regular political consultations about the situation in South-East Europe and possibilities of joint approach in addressing issues related to the region. They have also reaffirmed unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans and stressed their commitment to working on the promotion and development of the region, through the Adriatic Ionian Initiative (AII) and the EU Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region (EUSAIR).

Italy supports Croatia’s interest to join the informal meetings of the Mediterranean countries gathered in the MED7 format. They agreed that the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean needs to be addressed through creating an environment conducive to dialogue where open issues should be negotiated in good faith and in full respect of international law. As for the Southern Neighbourhood, they have reaffirmed the importance of the region for security and stability of Europe and welcomed the strategic discussion on the relaunch of the Southern Neighbourhood Partnership at the upcoming European Council in December.

As a potential candidate for the OECD membership, Croatia is working on fulfilling all the necessary requirements and it is very dedicated to achieve this goal. Italy supports the process of further enlargement of the OECD and recognizes the benefits of Croatia’s accession.

## Health

The two sides exchanged views and data on the current COVID-19 pandemic and its unprecedented impacts on health systems and the population, as well as the current status of vaccines and medical treatments. Further exchange of views will be focused on:

1. organization and changes of health systems during the COVID-19 pandemic, exchange of information regarding the human resources and highly sophisticated equipment used for treatment of patients.
2. health professionals and the impacts of stress, unknown diseases, high level of death cases and other factors on their wellbeing.
3. solutions to adjust human resources planning, improve health systems and implement joint findings in the future education of health professionals.

## Home Affairs

Croatia and Italy are faced with increased migratory pressures and as Member States at the EU frontiers are obligated to efficiently manage the EU external border and mixed migration flows. Against this backdrop and also mindful of the complex security challenges, in particular the recent terrorist attacks in Europe, Croatia and Italy expressed their commitment to intensify bilateral dialogue on home affairs with the aim of enhancing the exchange of experiences, knowledge and best practices.

On the new *Pact on Migration and Asylum* both countries agree that it is important to explore and strengthen mutual understanding on how to take into consideration, in an appropriate way, the specific migration challenges and the burden each EU Member State is faced with. In particular, Croatia and Italy:

- **agree** on the need of a “package” approach in the ongoing negotiations on the legislative proposals entailed in the new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum;
- **share the view** that frontline Member States should not be overburdened with mandatory border, asylum and return procedures;
- **underline the importance** of efficient return procedures coordinated by the Commission;
- **are fully committed** to cooperate more closely on fighting migrant smuggling and human trafficking along the Western Balkans and Central Mediterranean Route as well as on protecting vulnerable migrants and refugees;
- **declared their readiness** to engage in joint initiatives with Austria and Slovenia in order to better manage irregular migratory flows;
- **emphasized** the importance of Croatia’s accession to the Schengen Area as soon as possible, having in mind the importance of a comprehensive management of the longest external land border, and the introduction of new information systems as well as their interoperability with existing national and European systems and their importance in responding more efficiently to security and migratory challenges.

In line with the *EU Security Union Strategy 2020-2025*, both countries will continue to closely cooperate:

- on its implementation, with the aim of strengthening the security of their citizens and responding to modern security threats, while contributing to the strengthening of the security of the EU as a whole;
- with the countries of Southeast Europe supporting them in the transposition of the EU acquis in the area of justice, freedom and security, and in enhancing their commitments in the area of migration management and security in line with the Council Conclusions adopted during the Croatian Council Presidency.

Furthermore, Italy and Croatia:

- **are committed** to improved information sharing on potential terrorists and foreign terrorist fighters and to the exchange best practices and agreed that in this regard increased capabilities to carry out biometric checks is of vital importance;
- **confirmed the willingness** to do their utmost in order to enhance the cooperation of all relevant police authorities to better prevent and respond to the activities of organized crime groups along the Western Balkans route and reiterated their commitment to the so-called “follow the money approach”;
- **give special attention** to the dismantling of drug trafficking and migrant smuggling networks.

Building upon the experiences from the bilateral agreements already in place, Croatia and Italy declared their intention to engage in bilateral negotiations on the conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding with a special emphasis on an improved police cooperation in the fight against drug trafficking.

## Culture

The two Sides:

- **agree** to coordinate cooperation in areas and topics of joint interest within the European Union, in line with the *Declaration of European Union Ministers of Culture and Media* from April 2020, adopted on the initiative of the Croatian Presidency of the EU;
- **will fully support**, having in mind the difficult circumstances caused by the pandemic, affecting cultural and creative sectors and the next bilateral Executive Program 2021-25 - the continuation of cooperation of artists and cultural workers and provide conditions for the continuation of creative activities, in accordance with conditions and epidemiological measures.

In this regard, they exchanged views on the measures adopted by the Italian Government to support the cultural sector and noted with satisfaction that the Italian side sent a letter to EU Culture Ministers. Moreover, they welcomed the substantial increase (53% more than the current schedule) of European funds devoted to the Creative Europe program in the 2021-2027 budget.

Italy and Croatia:

- **agree** that particular support is needed for the organisation of the Venice Biennale, postponed to May/December 2021,
- **concur** on the need to foster bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the aim of exchanging views and knowledge in the area of restoration of cultural architectural

heritage damaged by natural disasters, with particular emphasis on the legal and normative framework;

- **share** the need to set up a European task force, a team of experts in charge of defending the European heritage at risk, as well as to set up a bilateral Working Group dealing with illicit trafficking in cultural goods.
- **agree** to strengthen cooperation between the International centre for underwater archaeology in Zadar and the High Institute for Conservation and Restoration within the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism.

## **Tourism**

Italy and Croatia:

- **recognize** the importance of the role of tourism for the economies of the EU Member States;
- **agree** to endeavour to better position the sector within the EU, especially following the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In order to improve cooperation, Croatia and Italy:

- **agree** to establish a Joint Working Group; .
- **will exchange** experiences and proposals related to the development of strategic documents, greening of tourism sector and ways of financing tourism at the EU level;
- **share** the need to make full use of current and future EU funds, also through cooperation within international and regional organizations, initiatives and working groups;
- **decided** to intensify cooperation and exchange of good practice in training and education and to encourage special forms of tourism that could contribute to the recovery (i.e. cultural, health and rural tourism, as well as "individual" forms of tourism which, together with innovation and digitalization, are the foundations of the future tourism development).
- **agree** to pay special attention to the exchange of experiences in those forms of tourism such as MICE and sports, that may contribute to diversify the touristic offer and reduce seasonality, as well as the phenomenon of over-tourism, which affects some destination of both countries. The Italian side offered to share its experience in the field of "Roots tourism", a niche form of tourism, which aims at attracting descendants of emigrants to discover the place of origin of their ancestors.
- **agree** to encourage contacts between Croatian and Italian tourism national tourist Boards in view of exploring cooperation in tourism promotion or joint participation in tourism events, as soon as circumstances will allow it (until then virtually), as well as to encourage contacts between national transport institutions in view to exploring possibilities of establishing better maritime transport links.

## **Economic and trade relations/Energy**

The two sides:

- **exchange** views on their current economic situation
- **express** satisfaction with their very good economic relations as well as with the favourable investment environment, as well as on national recovery and resilience

plans introduced by the two governments in response to the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic;

- **agree** on the importance of economic and trade cooperation;
- **express** their commitment to taking all necessary measures to further increase trade and investment flows;
- **recognize** the benefits of intensifying mutual direct investments;
- **encourage** their investment promotion entities to explore means for closer cooperation and organization of joint events promoting investment opportunities in both countries;
- **acknowledge** the great potential for further growth and diversification of bilateral trade;
- **emphasize** the importance of increasing industrial cooperation and **encourage** their respective private sectors to explore opportunities for joint investment projects according to the IPCEI model in the fields of production of parts for machinery and equipment, pharmaceutical and chemical industry, metal processing industry, **steel production**, food and wood processing, textile, leather and printing industry, shipbuilding industry, production of naval equipment, ICT sector and defence industry; **reaffirmed** their intention to cooperate on national, regional or local level by creating a “Regional network of entrepreneurial infrastructure” that would improve and facilitate business operations of companies in both countries;
- **express** their interest in developing cooperation in the SME sector, particularly in its digital transformation through exchange of experiences and best practices, chiefly in the field of education and training for improving digital skills. Croatia is interested in cooperation with the Italian national authorities responsible for ensuring sustainability and development of the SME sector with a focus on the exchange of experiences and good practices regarding the business transfer process. The Croatian side proposes cooperation in transferring knowledge and good practices within the Cooperative-based entrepreneurship, which is considerably developed in Italy;
- **express** interest in the continuation of regional consultations on Integrated Energy and Climate Plans, with the emphasis on new technologies and renewable energy sources;
- **stress** their special interest in cooperating on future strategic planning of decarbonisation and use of existing natural gas infrastructure into infrastructures that can transport alternative energy sources, on safety of offshore upstream installations as well as the decommissioning and reuse of offshore platform.

### **Sustainable Development/Environment**

Considering environmental protection and climate change key challenges of our present times, Croatia and Italy:

- **confirm** their dedication to cooperating in order to overcome them and the intention to accelerate the transition to climate neutrality by 2050, in line with the Paris Agreement;
- **support** firmly the European Green Deal presented by the European Commission, as the core driver for sustainable growth, innovation and jobs and the European Climate Law and the definition, by the EU, of an enhanced CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction by target by 2030;

- **agree** to exchange experiences on developing the system for monitoring the impact of and adaptation to climate change.

Fully aware of the crucial role in the fight against the emerging threats to our marine and coastal ecosystems, Croatia and Italy:

- **are committed** to strengthening regional and sub-regional cooperation on marine environment within the framework of the Barcelona Convention (Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean), as well as within other relevant international and regional organizations and existing mechanisms of institutional cooperation;
- **are determined** to strengthen their bilateral cooperation as well as cooperation with other coastal states in the implementation of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (EU MFSD), a key-instrument for the achievement of the Good Environmental Status (GES) in the EU marine waters; such cooperation shall include the definition of common trend, threshold and measures for the GES as well as the identification of harmonized measures for the assessment, prevention, monitoring and management of marine litter;
- **commit** to strengthen the existing cooperation in the field of prevention, preparedness and response to major marine pollution incidents deriving from the maritime transport; a timely and coordinated action to be carried out in the framework of the Barcelona Convention through the Sub Regional Contingency Plan for the Prevention of, Preparedness for and Response to Major Marine Pollution Incidents in the Adriatic Sea and the OPCR Convention, would increase the level of safety in the whole Adriatic.

Recalling the 1974 Agreement on Cooperation for the Protection of the Waters of the Adriatic Sea and Coastal Zones from Pollution, Croatia and Italy:

- **will step up** efforts to continue the work of the Joint Commission for the Protection of the Adriatic Sea;
- **will focus** specifically on information sharing on the implementation of measures and monitoring activities established under the EU MFSD in relation to EC Decision (EU) 2017/848 laying down criteria and methodological standards on good environmental status of marine waters and specifications and standardised methods for monitoring and assessment, as well as the ECAP and IMAP Programs under the Barcelona Convention;
- **will continue to strengthen** their cooperation through the implementation of joint marine litter Projects of regional and sub-regional scope, taking into consideration the relevant EU *acquis* such as the updated UNEP/MAP Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean under the Barcelona Convention;
- **reaffirm** their support to global efforts on marine litter, including the work of the Ad-hoc Open-ended Expert Group on Marine Litter and Microplastics under UNEA and to the process of designation of the entire Mediterranean Sea as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides (SECA) in accordance with Decision IG.24/08 - Road Map for a Proposal for the Possible Designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides Pursuant to MARPOL Annex VI,

within the Framework of the Barcelona Convention that was adopted at the 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

Croatia calls upon urgent knowledge exchange, including monitoring data and conservation practices for the most endangered species in the Adriatic Sea - *Pinna nobilis* and encourages the opening of a dialogue on the issue of preserving the Adriatic sea in order to contribute to achievement of EU 2030 nature protection targets, particularly encompassing at least 30% protection, both for sea and for land in the EU. In this respect, both countries:

- **will cooperate** in the process of definition of an ambitious and transformative post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030;
- **commit** to collaborate to promote the 30by30 Initiative, within the framework of the Global Ocean Alliance, aiming at the protection of 30% of global Ocean by 2030 through concrete and effective management measures for such purpose;
- **encourage** the conclusion of the Implementation Agreement to UNCLOS for the protection and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in the areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ);
- **confirm** the great value of their technical cooperation in the context of the Interreg transboundary project “SoundScape” on determining the impact of underwater noise on marine fauna and ecosystem of the North Adriatic with the establishment of a cross-border monitoring network.

### **Telecommunication**

Considering the importance of electronic media, and particularly television broadcasting, and recognizing the positive developments in resolving Italian harmful interference towards Croatian television reception from 2017, Italy and Croatia:

- **are committed** to resolve - in order to facilitate the implementation of wireless broadband communications in the harmonised 700 MHz spectrum band in accordance with Decision (EU) 2017/899, and having in mind that the migration of TV broadcasting services to a new DVB-T2/HEVC standard below 694 MHz in Croatia was completed on 12 November 2020 - remaining harmful interference cases in order to ensure future interference free operation of television and 5G networks in UHF band (470 – 790 MHz),
- **agree** to resolve harmful interference to FM and DAB services along the Croatian coast in Adriatic region, particularly in Istria and Dalmatia.

### **Transport and Infrastructure**

The Mediterranean corridor is very significant for the transport connection between Italy and Croatia. The Corridor completion is essential for developing the whole TEN-T network since it represents the main West-East European connection. Croatia contributes with the branch of corridor Rijeka-Zagreb–State border. There are three railway construction projects on the corridor, and four projects are in the phase of study development.

Italy and Croatia:

- **deem** that further efforts are needed to implement the TEN-T network, according to current Regulation EU 1315/2013, as well as in the perspective of the upcoming revision process of the above mentioned Regulation;
- **are committed** to enhancing the mutual cooperation in the maritime sector, namely to promote the development of the ports of both Countries;
- **are engaged** to examine all possible forms of collaboration in order to develop an efficient network between ports;
- **will closely cooperate** in the field of maritime safety and marine environment protection, also in proposing solutions that will lead to the improvement of maritime traffic safety and marine environment protection in the Adriatic Sea.

Close cooperation between Croatia and Italy is also noted in the aviation sector. The aviation authorities from both countries cooperate within the EU and international civil aviation organizations thus facilitating the exchange of views and coordination of joint activities, more recently in the in the field of airspace management. Both countries will strive to improve their cooperation on the commercial aspect of civil aviation thus looking to enhance the air connectivity between the two countries.

In the field of road transport, Italy and Croatia:

- **take note** of the recent adoption of relevant dossiers of the first Mobility Package, through which an attempt was made to ensure a legal framework for the transport market based on the principles of fair competition and social protection of drivers;
- **confirm** their commitment in the European framework, based on the balanced approach ensuring both social protection of drivers and the need to ensure legislation that works in practice and does not create excessive administrative and financial burden for the sector, for the purposes of promoting a constructive collaboration for the adoption of further necessary acts and for the effective application of the approved legislation.

## **Agriculture and Fisheries**

Croatia and Italy:

- **continue** to be dedicated to their mutual cooperation through the ADRIATICA Regional Group. Already achieved valuable results prove the quality of the cooperation and enhance the overall management of the resources at the level of the basin;
- **agree** to continue discussion on the new GFCM Multiannual Plan for Small pelagics in the Adriatic, since the existing management package expires in 2021. The development of a new GFCM Multiannual Plan becomes a key priority in the coming period;
- **believe** that is important to continue to have a fruitful cooperation, especially through the ADRIATICA Regional Group, in order to improve the management approach, starting from the one currently in force, that is based on fishing effort management strengthened by the safety mechanism in a form of the total catch limit for both of the main targeted species – sardine and anchovy– which, under certain circumstances, might be further developed;
- **support** providing a predictable and stable environment for the industry;

- **share** a common view on the need for an appropriate evaluation of the management regime applied so far, as well as on the need to further improve the scientific advice;
- **recognize** the positive effects of the established Jabuka/Pomo FRA which proved to be an adequate mechanism for protection and recovery of demersal fishing resources in the Adriatic and **have agreed** to support the continuation of the existing management regime in the area over a long term;
- **agree** that the strong cooperation and supportive approach at all levels, bottom up directed, is the correct way to cooperate and that the existing example of Jabuka/Pomo Pit proves that this is a successful model contributing to the overall protection of the resources and ensuring sustainability of fisheries.

The Croatian side informed about the initiative for the introduction of a new quality label for (*super, premium*) extra virgin olive oil, which would distinguish a new, even higher category of olive oil, from the current labeling, which would be of interest to both, Croatian and Italian producers.

Both countries agreed of continuation of cooperation in the field of animal husbandry and food quality, since Italy is a long-term trading partner of great importance for the cattle and horse sector of Croatia. The Italian market appreciates products of known origin, and one of the goals of cooperation will be the development of a system of recognition and promotion of beef and horse meat from Croatia to the Italian market.

Croatia is interested in exchange of knowledge and experience regarding the Italians producer's organization. In that context, both countries will closely collaborate in organizing study visits of Croatian experts to Italian associations of producers and Italian research organization.

In particular, Croatia and Italy:

- **share** the view that food labelling can be a useful tool to convey correct and transparent information to consumers;
- **agree** on the importance of indicating the origin and provenance of food products and raw materials, as well as on the need of a scientific approach to nutritional labelling, encouraging balanced diets by providing transparent and factual information on nutrients content and **agree** on the need of further dialogue regarding the development of EU harmonized scheme, depending on the proposed model of European Commission.

## **Research and Education**

Croatia and Italy:

- **wish** to further strengthen the bilateral cooperation in the areas of higher education and mobility;
- **agree** to advance the cooperation within the Erasmus+ Programme, encouraging agreements between their respective education institutions, bearing in mind their academic independence, in order to increase mobility at all levels;
- **decide to encourage**, on the principles of reciprocity and available financial resources, the development and improvement of the level of teaching of the Croatian language and literature in higher education institutions in Italy, and Italian language and literature in higher education institutions in Croatia;

- **agree**, as a further means of strengthening bilateral cooperation in scientific R&D, **to encourage** their scientist to cooperate with other country in carrying out joint projects for the EU Research and Innovation program Horizon Europe and **to support** the cooperation on cross-border and satellite quantum-secured communications within the EuroQCI cluster of the European quantum communication infrastructure;
- **support** the implementation of the stipulations of the previously signed agreements on cooperation and exchange in the field of science and education, which are in force and which over the past period proved to be useful to both sides.

In view of the next meeting of the Coordination Committee of Ministers to be held in Italy, the two sides agree to establish focal points in the line ministries that will carry out a periodic review of activities agreed during today meeting. The two Ministries of Foreign Affairs will coordinate an assessment of the achievements on a regular basis.

Zagreb, 30 November 2020

For the Government  
of the Republic of Croatia

For the Government  
of the Italian Republic

Gordan Grlić Radman  
Minister of Foreign and European Affairs

Luigi Di Maio  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
and International Cooperation