

GREETING
from the President Jadranka Radovanić at
the opening of the 6th Forum of the Chambers
of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Region.
24-26 May 2006, Durrës, Albania

Dear participants, guests and all of you present. I am pleased to greet you on behalf of the Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Region.

If you will allow me, I would like to outline our history and the results achieved up to now, for this sixth edition of the Forum. This association has established itself as an international institution in just three years and, in May of this year, presented itself at important EC offices in Brussels. On this occasion, the work carried out by the Forum was acknowledged and greeted with satisfaction. Among the regional institutions of its kind, the Forum was considered the only one to have produced concrete results, to the extent that it was suggested that the Forum be presented to the European Parliament and awarded legal recognition, in order to offer the Forum the possibility of direct access to funding for EC projects. Indeed, high-level joint projects will only be possible with the help of EC programme funds.

This year, the Forum organised the 1st International Congress on Women in Business of the Adriatic and Ionian Region, which had been agreed at the same Round Table during the last Forum. The Congress, under the patronage of the President of the Republic of Croatia Stjepan Mesić and with the support of the Ministry of Economy and the Croatian Government's Department for equal opportunities, was held on 20 and 21 April in Dubrovnik. 110 female entrepreneurs attended the Congress, and were able to compare their experiences on the status women in business in the various countries. Afterwards, there was a presentation of each company and the business plans.

Equally, the need for a training course for Chambers of Commerce directors emerged from the discussions at the 2005 Forum. This course was run in September last year, relating to the procedures for drafting projects which contribute to the award of EU funding, destined for entrepreneurs.

In addition, as a result of the Agriculture Round Table, a study trip to the region of Marche was organised for the benefit of several representatives of farms and food companies from the Eastern coast of the Adriatic. The trip was designed to encourage an exchange of experiences with the aims of incentivising forms of association among small and medium-sized farms, and identifying a model of association for people working in the agriculture and food industries.

Finally, during the past few months, the work of the International Arbitration Court of the Adriatic and Ionian Region has also continued. The Court is an organ of the Forum and offers qualified conciliation, arbitration, adjudication and expert services to ensure quicker and easier resolution of disputes between traders from the various countries in the Adriatic and Ionian basin.

The aim of the organism is to overcome the problems caused by different legal systems within the Adriatic macro-region and therefore, develop and expand economic and commercial relations. In particular, all the necessary documentation was prepared so that the Court can begin full operations in the region: standard arbitration and mediation clauses were drafted, to be inserted in the contracts and to be provided to anyone wanting to use the Court's services; the lists of mediators, arbitrators, experts and adjudicators were drawn up. These experts, with proven abilities and excellent profiles, are recognised

at international level and specialise in alternative dispute resolution. A Code of Conduct was approved, which contains a series of ethical rules that must be observed by all members of the Court, failing which they will be struck off the register. This will ensure impartiality, expertise, and professional discipline of people asked to cover the various assignments. There was further study and regulation of some less well-known procedures such as adjudication and the contractual expert procedure.

In terms of promotion, the Court already has its own Internet site, featuring the regulations, tariffs, and all the initiatives to be organised and promoted. It also has its own logo to be printed on the promotional material and documents issued.

With these instruments and the asset represented by its members' skills and professional abilities, the Court is now ready to start gathering experience and to become an important landmark for all traders in the area.

In view of the activities carried out up to now and the results achieved in a relatively short period, we expect that this year's Forum will lead to a continuation and further development of the ongoing initiatives. With this in mind I hope that everyone's contribution proves to be constructive and successful.

Dr. Jadranka Radovanic

President of the Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Region
President of the Chamber of Commerce of the region of Split