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**President of the Ancona Chamber of Commerce
Vice president of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce Forum**

Dear guests,

welcome to the opening of the 7th Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Region in the name of **the bodies that I represent and preside: the Ancona Chamber of Commerce and the Regional Union of Chamber of Commerce constituted by the Ancona, Ascoli Piceno, Macerata and Pesaro Chambers of Commerce:**

It is not merely force of habit if I say that it is today a great pleasure and privilege for me to open this edition of the Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Region, hosted by Italy.

After the first edition in 2001, when we held the first plenary session of the Forum in Ancona, we find ourselves once again hosting a very special edition of our annual meeting. Six years have passed, but our Association is not suffering any crisis. Indeed, the Forum has gone from strength to strength and over the years has developed and broadened its horizons, obtaining important, concrete results.

Thanks and very warm regards go first of all to **Jadranka Radovanić, Chairwoman of the A.I.C. Forum**, whom we hold in great esteem and with whom we enjoy a very profitable collaboration. May we also pay her our compliments on her management of this presidency.

A special welcome to all our international guests, represented by the 30 economic organisations from countries on both sides of the Adriatic: Croatia (also represented by a team of experts of the National Government and the Institute of Oceanography and Fishing in Split), the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Slovenia, Albania and **Greece**, a country with a particularly numerous delegation here today.

We are also honoured to have with us **Pontus Lindberg, representing the Association of Chambers of Commerce of the Baltic Sea** (whom we had the pleasure of meeting in Ancona in November 2005 during a workshop organised by the Adriatic Secretariat and the Region of Marche) a sign that Europe is opening up towards all areas of growing interest which present opportunities for collaboration.

I would like to thank **Fabio Pizzino, representative of the National Union of Chambers of Commerce**, for his extremely valuable contribution, which confirms the work done by the Chambers within a dynamic system that interacts and communicates in the interests of the economy. Chambers of Commerce can provide important resources and a professional, dynamic structure for local development projects. In particular, the Ancona Chamber is proving to be a landmark within its province, as an agent for simplifying and coordinating initiatives between local stakeholders. We know that our task is to allow others to fully implement their work, in the interests of our country.

It is with a view to collaboration, and the sharing of projects and energies, that I consider essential the presence alongside me today of representatives from local authorities: the **President of the Regional Authority Gian Mario Spacca and President of the Regional Council for The Marche Region, Raffaele Bucciarelli, President of the Provincial Authority Enzo Giancarli**, and the **Mayor of Ancona, Fabio Sturani**.

We are certain that alone, it is almost impossible to do anything, which is why our Chamber of Commerce intends to further consolidate its alliances and agreements with the **regional authority, local authorities and the Forum of Adriatic Cities**, and play a leading role in economic activity together with them. An essential part of this is the relationship with the **Università Politecnica delle Marche**, represented by the **Honourable**

Rector Marco Pacetti, with whom we are developing new initiatives, particularly aimed at small and medium-sized businesses, specifically within the project Uniadriion (network of universities of the Adriatic and Ionian Region).

It is impossible to imagine further renewal without the direct, pro-active involvement of **banks**. Their knowledge of the local area, the stakeholders and dynamics, represents an extremely valuable asset. This is borne out by the presence of **UniCredit Banca d'Impresa** as sponsors of the 2007 Forum, a bank with a strong presence in the cross-border Balkan area.

Also essential today are **close links with EC institutions, and the European scope of this 2007 Forum, organised with prestigious support from the European Parliament, also confirms that we are on the right road from this point of view:** influential members of the European Commission and European Parliament (as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Directorate for Europe and Eurochambres) will illustrate, among other things, the current and future direction of EC policy. Specifically, they will be able to respond to issues arising at each special-interest round table. For this, I would like to thank **Hon. Luciana Sbarbati whose presence and involvement in our association shows that the Forum is an example of good practices that will continue to encourage development in the Adriatic basin; the important** recognition is another step towards strengthening the process of legal accreditation which has been undertaken with EC institutions, a process which the Forum began in Brussels during 2006, and which will end in September 2007 with its official presentation to the European Parliament.

The accreditation process represents a fundamental stage on the road towards achieving full legal recognition for the Association, which is strategic in order to support the solid foundations that the EU and Western Balkan states are trying to build together. The Forum's aim is to apply, as an independent candidate, in EC programmes, in order to play an active part. By gaining full recognition of its legal status, the association will be able to help members with their international planning activities, harmonising local potential and areas of excellence on both sides of the Adriatic. **Next autumn, at the Mini-plenary session of the European Parliament**, the Forum will be presented to the European authorities during the meeting entitled: *The Euro-Adriatic dimension. An example of excellence: the Forum Of The Chambers Of Commerce Of The Adriatic And Ionian Region*

The 2007 Forum is also strategic for two other specific reasons: the first is the launch of activities which form part of a project to develop the **legal, commercial, conciliation and arbitration services in the Adriatic**, financed by national funds (law no. 84/01) in order to harmonise procedures between countries overlooking the Adriatic. The project will be explained by Daniele Mantucci. Mr. Mantucci is chairman of the **International Court of the Adriatic and Ionian Region**, a body which developed within the Forum, **now finally operational** and able to offer qualified services of conciliation, arbitration, adjudication and contractual experts' services for dispute resolution in the Adriatic and Ionian area.

Another strategic aspect of this edition of the Forum comes from the **contribution given by the Forum and Chamber of Commerce of Ancona to the European Commission's Green Paper on EU maritime policy**. The Secretary General of the Ancona Chamber of Commerce and the Forum, Michele De Vita, will speak to you at length on this subject tomorrow.

It was important to hold the 7th edition of the Forum in Ancona, to further boost the **strategic role of this city and region as a cornerstone in a wider area - an area which includes the Adriatic and Ionian seas and which may be extended further, in order to play a major role in the heart of a new Europe whose boundaries are mapped out by the sea. A Europe that has become increasingly united not only by its history, traditions and culture, but also by the economic interests of its businesses.** We believe that a more dynamic economy in the Adriatic could help boost employment, ensure greater prosperity to

citizens as a whole, and create the need for greater investment by activating public, national and EC financing.

This is why we propose to provide a specific contribution towards creating an **Adriatic Euroregion**: this catchy term, elaborated by the Region of Marche, denotes all the local areas which combine to make up a large and varied geopolitical region. In this regard, we believe that the best way to implement the projects for a Euro-Mediterranean area is the **Adriatic Secretariat**, which is already operational and able to assist with the planning of local development and territorial cooperation initiatives by everyone in the public and private sector.

I should remind you that the idea of an Adriatic Secretariat came from the "Conference for Adriatic Development and Security" held in Ancona during 2000, as part of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative promoted by the Italian government. Heavily promoted by the Region of Marche in order to ensure cohesion, stability, security and sustainable development in accordance with paragraph 9 of the Ancona Declaration, high-profile partners of the Secretariat include **the Forum of Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Region, the university network Uniadrion, and the Forum of Adriatic Cities. Its prime area for intervention is the Adriatic Euroregion.**

In wishing all of you a successful meeting and an enjoyable stay in Ancona, may I leave you with a welcome from our local representatives, followed by the two sessions dedicated to "*Neighbourhood and Expansion*" and the "*Chambers of Commerce in Europe and the Adriatic: a network supporting SMEs*".

May I remind you that this afternoon **there will be a meeting of the 6 established round tables, on the subjects of Agriculture, Transport, the Environment, Fishing and Fish Farming, Tourism and Women in Business.** These are excellent opportunities for discussion and will lay the foundations for future collaboration in areas of common interest. The final documents emerging from the various discussions will be officially explained tomorrow morning. Tomorrow there will also be a report from Željana Bevanda, Vice President of the International Court, on the court's first year of activity, marking the end of the set-up phase and the launch of the promotional phase.

During these two days, packed with activity, the working sessions will be coordinated by an outstanding moderator, **Vittorio Da Rold**, a journalist from the national paper *Il Sole 24 Ore*, who has dedicated a large amount of space to our initiative. Before I finish, may I finally thank the **Ancona Chamber of Commerce staff** for its energy and professionalism in organising this Forum, in the hope that it will remain a key experience along this shared path towards cooperation and integrated development in the Adriatic and Ionian region.