Statement of the Italian Contact Point
for the "EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region"

As institutional commitments prevented me from accepting the kind invitation of the organizers of the Forum to attend as Speaker, I am glad send a few remarks, wishing the Forum much success.

- The 13th edition of the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce takes place in the crucial phase of the start of the preparation of the Plan of Action of the "EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region", after the European Council's mandate of last 14th December to the Commission for the preparation of the Strategy before the end of 2014.
- As EU macro-regional Strategies are based on territories, the proposals and interests of the economic and trade actors of the Adriatic and Ionian Region are of the utmost importance for the preparation of a well-focused and sustainable, thus effective, Plan of Action of the Adriatic and Ionian Strategy. Such proposals and interests will be addressed at national level to the National Contact Points for the "EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region". For example, the outcomes of this edition of the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce can greatly contribute to the national identification of the interests and perceptions on the Strategy in each national business community.

In this perspective, a positive outcome of the Forum can already be acknowledged. A growing synergy among the three Adriatic and Ionian Fora (Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce; UNIADRION - Universities; Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Cities and Towns) and the Permanent Secretariat of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative may allow civil society in all its dimensions to better interact with the governmental dimension, thus making the "System" of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative more comprehensive and more coherent with the path to the Adriatic and Ionian Macro-region.

- As for Italy, a proactive role of Italian companies is essential for an effective definition of the Italian position on the Plan of Action, coordinated by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs together with the Italian Department for Development and Cohesion Policies, Ministry of Economic Development, competent for the relevant EU Funds (ESI) and for the Partnership Agreement.

Italy is actively implementing a national consultation with the relevant partners in order to take into account, where appropriate, the "EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region" in the Partnership Agreement and in the programming referred to EU funds different from ESI funds and to national funds.

- Italy deems it appropriate to timely work to ensure coherence coordination between the elaboration of the Plan of Action of the "Strategy" and the 2014-2020 programming.

Italy is grateful to the European Commission – DG REGIO for the very useful exchange of experience on this issue in the meeting among National Contact Points of the EU Macro-regional Strategies for the Baltic Sea Region, the Danube Region and the Adriatic and Ionian Region (Bucharest, 16th and 17th of April, 2013).

Italy will host in the coming weeks the first joint meeting among the National Contact Points of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region, the National representatives of the EU Member States in the Region responsible for drafting the Partnership Agreements, the National IPA Coordinators from the non-EU Countries of the Adriatic and Ionian Strategy and Representatives of the European Commission.

Couns. Andrea Vitolo
Italian National Contact Point
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