

JOINT STATEMENT OF MONTENEGRO-ALBANIA-CROATIA ADRIATIC TRILATERAL MEETING OF MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Budva, July 20th 2018.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, Srđan Darmanović, the Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, Ditmir Bushati and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia Marija Pejčinović-Burić met in Budva, Montenegro, on July 20th 2018 for the third Adriatic Trilateral Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

Recalling the Joint Declaration adopted at their first meeting in Split, Croatia, on February 10th 2017 and the Joint Statement adopted at their second meeting in Durres, Albania on November 17th 2017, Ministers reaffirmed the importance of this strategic platform of cooperation between the three countries, as a valuable mechanism contributing also to the security, stability and prosperity of the South East Europe.

Ministers took stock of the recent summits of NATO, EU and the Berlin Process. They expressed satisfaction that NATO and EU once more reaffirmed the credibility of the Open Door Policy and EU Enlargement Process. We strongly support the historic agreement reached between Skopje and Athens on the name issues and congratulate the Republic of Macedonia for the invitation to start Accession Talks with the Alliance. Ministers agreed to continue and strengthen public diplomacy efforts to support Macedonia until final steps of its NATO-integration are completed. Ministers also welcomed the proposal of the European Commission on visa liberalization for Kosovo which will strengthen ties between citizens of Kosovo and European Union.

Ministers expressed strong support to the decision of the Council of European Union that sets out the path towards opening accession negotiations in June 2019 with Albania and Macedonia, after the necessary reforms have been implemented. In that regard, ministers highlighted the importance of cooperation and experience sharing towards full regional integration into the EU and expressed gratitude to Croatia for continuous generous help and support to Montenegro and Albania in their integration processes. The Ministers recalled that good neighborly relations and regional cooperation remain essential elements of the enlargement process. In that regard, the Ministers underlined that the Council warmly welcomed Montenegro's continued positive role in further developing regional cooperation and advancing good neighbourly relations.

Ministers discussed current security challenges in the region and devoted special attention to hybrid threats aiming to derail its Euro Atlantic and European integration processes. They concluded that strengthening of institutions through reforms, strategic communication and credible integration processes should be stepped up in order to counter those negative influences and strengthen resilience, thus further reinforcing the stability and security of South East Europe.

The Ministers also stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation in the fight against illegal migration.

Ministers stressed the importance of building synergies between the Adriatic Trilateral and other initiatives and platforms of cooperation in Europe. In this regard, Ministers agreed to work jointly towards including Montenegro and Albania in the Three Seas Initiative (Adriatic – Baltic – Black Sea) projects, recognizing that initiative as one of the most important mechanisms for fostering of security and economic development in Central, Eastern and South – Eastern Europe.

Ministers deliberated about current and future projects as part of national agendas in infrastructure and energy. They recalled the paramount importance of the Ionian Adriatic Pipeline as regional project which strategically interconnect Albania, Montenegro and Croatia and strengthens energy independence of South East Europe. In this framework, Ministers agreed to focus on the incentives and possibilities that would help to speed up the implementation stages and work jointly to address the financial support for the project.

Ministers reiterated that the Adriatic Trilateral Ministerial is an excellent example of how likeminded countries can join their efforts to offer better synergies to the common regional agenda and joint efforts in the fields of tourism and protection of environment as well as to the broader endeavors to enhance the economic cooperation in South East Europe. In that regard, the ministers stressed the importance of the trilateral meeting of ministers responsible for the environment held on 20 February 2018 in Dubrovnik as well as two follow up meetings on expert level on strengthening existing cooperation with the aim of addressing the problem of marine litter, having in mind the importance of clean environment and focus on the development of sustainable tourism in Adriatic area.

Ministers agreed that the fourth Adriatic Trilateral Ministerial will take place in Croatia in 2019.