

Joint Declaration

The seventh meeting of the Coordination Committee of Ministers, based on the Memorandum on Cooperation between the Government of the Italian Republic and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia signed in 2007, was held on 14 June 2021 in Rome. Due to restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic the meeting was organized in part via videoconference with bilateral meetings of individual Ministries taking place beforehand.

Ministers of Foreign Affairs Luigi Di Maio and Dr Anže Logar welcomed the positive dynamics of bilateral political dialogue. The visit by the Italian and Slovenian Heads of State Sergio Mattarella and Borut Pahor to Trieste and Basovizza on 13 July 2020 was a landmark event in fostering mutual understanding and reconciliation between both nations. The return of Narodni dom in Trieste to the Slovenian minority has a particular symbolic place in this process. Delegations expressed their commitment to regular consultations on European, regional and multilateral issues on both political and working levels.

Both sides stressed the significance of the autochthonous Italian and Slovenian national minorities living in Slovenia and in Italy respectively, and their contribution to the cross border cooperation, e.g. Interreg projects to promote multiculturalism and multilingualism as touristic and cultural assets of the territory, populated by both minorities. In this respect, they acknowledged the contribution of the Slovenian programme of RAI in Friuli Venezia Giulia and Radio TV Capodistria for the respective minorities and the importance to safeguard their services. The two sides confirmed their commitment to consistently safeguard and enforce the rights of the two minorities, in line with the national legislation and international legal instruments and reiterated the importance of the inclusion of both minorities in the decision making process regarding their rights.

Delegations welcomed the selection of Gorizia and Nova Gorica as the European Capital of Culture 2025 with the vision of enhancing cross border cooperation, creating unified while culturally diverse urban area. In the field of cultural cooperation, both sides expressed the intention to renew the Executive Programme in the field of culture and education for the period of 2021 to 2025 in the nearest future.

In view of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the two sides underlined the importance of the EU and its Member States working together both to contain the pandemic and alleviate its economic and social consequences. Rapid adoption of digital green certificates will enable the free movement of persons across the EU. However, a constant effort is needed to secure the production of a sufficient quantity of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines both within the EU and for partner countries. Both sides underlined the importance of global action to address the immediate health crisis as well as humanitarian needs of people in most affected countries. In order to secure a speedy, sustainable and inclusive recovery of European economy, beneficial to all of our citizens, the financial support to Member States from the Recovery and Resilience Facility must be implemented swiftly. In this respect, special emphasis must be given to investments in green and digital transformation as well as much needed reforms that will result in greater competitiveness and resilience of our societies.

Both sides share the vision of a resilient, prosperous, competitive, socially responsible and secure European Union. They stressed the urgent need for the EU to become a true global player. Strengthening the European integration in the most efficient and functioning way and avoiding divisions among Member States must remain the cornerstone of the discussion on the future of Europe. The two sides welcomed the Presidency of the Council of the EU by Slovenia in the second semester 2021 as an opportunity to build up on such discussions and further consolidate their cooperation on the key challenges the European Union is facing today. Italy and Slovenia commit to

approach constructively the negotiation on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum with the aim to move forward with the main controversial key points, which are at the core of the Pact.

EU enlargement to the Western Balkans must remain a top priority of the EU agenda. Both sides welcomed the positive progress made with the adoption of the revised methodology on enlargement and the decision by the European General Affairs Council in March 2020 to open accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia. While reiterating the need for the countries in the region to adopt and implement structural reforms, both sides underlined the urgent need for the EU to look at the enlargement process with a strategic vision, strengthening its political dimension and conveying tangible signals of the EU commitment to the region. Both sides expressed the will for a proactive approach in the enlargement that would enable further progress for all the countries of the Western Balkans. At the same time, particular attention should be paid to addressing the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemics in the Western Balkans countries and to the recovery of their economies, including the creation of a positive perspective for young people.

Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations also remain essential elements of the enlargement process. Both sides committed to strengthen their cooperation in the regional frameworks, such as the Central European Initiative (CEI), the Adriatic Ionian Initiative (AII), the Berlin process and the Brdo-Briuni process. In this respect, the Slovenian Presidency of the AII represented a catalyst to consolidate further cooperation in the Adriatic and Ionian region on key areas such as green transition, connectivity and youth agenda. Italy and Slovenia are committed to the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region and Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), which significantly contributes to European Green Deal, European Digital Agenda, post COVID-19 Smart and Green Recovery and to the European integration process of the Western Balkans countries.

Ministers Di Maio and Logar welcomed the trilateral cooperation with Croatia in the North Adriatic, launched in Trieste on 19 December 2020. They underlined the importance of enhanced cooperation between coastal countries in the field of connectivity, blue economy and environmental protection in line with the Joint Declaration signed in Ljubljana on 21 April 2021.

In view of the next Coordination Committee of Ministers to be held in Slovenia, the two sides agreed to focus their cooperation on the following areas:

SECURITY AND MIGRATION

1. **Counter-terrorism:** Italy and Slovenia stress the importance of sharing data and information on potential terrorists and returning foreign fighters to their national territories and agree on the need of a stronger exchange of information and best practices.
2. **Organized crime:** Both sides are fully aware of the need to improve police response to the various activities of organized crime along the Western Balkans route and of the importance of the so-called "follow the money approach". Italy and Slovenia agree to step up their cooperation against criminal networks and their activities, especially drug and arms trafficking and migrant smuggling.
3. **Migration:** Italy and Slovenia intend to consolidate cooperation in migration management through joint activities along the common border area as well as the shared application of the Readmission Agreement of persons detected in irregular position. The two sides also share the view to promote joint initiatives with Austria and Croatia in order to better manage the irregular migratory flows along the Western Balkans route. Both sides will be fully committed to cooperating in fighting smuggling and human trafficking along Western Balkans Route and Mediterranean Route.

SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURES AND MOBILITY

1. **Sustainable and smart mobility:** Italy and Slovenia support the European Commission "Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy". The ecological and digital transition represents an opportunity to develop just, efficient and sustainable models also in the transport sector. Against this background, Italy and Slovenia intend enhancing their cooperation, at the bilateral level as well as in the EU framework.
2. **Connectivity:** the two sides will work closely together, in view of sharing best practices and building upon lessons learned during COVID-19 to restore free movement of goods and functionality of transport in the European Union, which have once again proved to be an essential element for the existence of the single market and guarantee of social well-being. Italy and Slovenia confirm their commitment to implement the TEN-T network, especially cross-border railway connections, based on current Regulation EU 1315/2013, and will support them also in the perspective of future revised networks and updated Corridors.
3. **Transport Community:** Italy and Slovenia welcome the four sectorial action plans to be adopted and the funding opportunities in the region, as outlined in the Communication on the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans issued by the European Commission.

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

1. **Industry cooperation:** the two sides will work together to support new investments and joint ventures and to promote business cooperation in the field of high-tech, research and innovation, with specific reference to sectors such as machinery, green transition, mobility and automotive industry, agrifood, wood and tourism. To this end, business events (e.g. the "Italian Business Forum"), will be organised to bring together both communities and offer new business opportunities, building up on the existing MoU between ITA Agency and SPIRIT Slovenija signed in 2017.
2. **Energy:** Italy and Slovenia commit to strengthen European energy security through the adoption of a bilateral intergovernmental agreement on security of gas supply establishing a solidarity mechanism to secure gas supply for protected customers in case of emergency according to EU Regulation 2017/1938. They will further enhance regional cooperation within the National Energy and Climate Plans to support the adoption of policies aimed at encouraging the transition towards a decarbonised economy, reaffirming the importance of the CESEC multilateral framework for regional cooperation in the area of central and southern Europe. The two sides will support the cooperation on the implementation of Project of Common Interest to pursue EU market integration.
3. **Cross-border interferences:** Italy will continue the switching-off of the remaining interfering TV channels and will complete it by the end of 2021, according to the Decision 2017/899/UE, the Adriatic and Ionian Agreement signed on 3 October 2017 and its respective national roadmap. Both countries undertake to apply fully the provisions set out in Geneva 84 and Geneva 06 agreements and reaffirm their commitment to resolve swiftly the issue of FM and DAB frequency interferences in line with international legal obligations, arising, inter alia, from their membership in the International Telecommunication Union, the EU regulations and Agreed Minutes of Alfano - Erjavec meeting (9 November 2017 in Rome).

ENVIRONMENT

1. **Water:** the two sides will further enhance the existing fruitful cooperation in the field of sustainable river basin management, hydrogeological and flood risk management and the development of green infrastructures with a view to achieve sustainable development and green growth in the transboundary river basins and the cross-border area.
2. **Adriatic Sea:** Italy and Slovenia will make their utmost efforts to make the Mediterranean a clean and ecologically sustainable Sea, with a special attention on the protection and blue growth of the Adriatic Sea and its coastal zones. In particular, the Parties will push forward

the initiative to create a SECA area (for Sox) in the Mediterranean, launched in Naples at COP 21 of the Barcelona Convention, and to exchange ideas in order to advance the procedure in view of the next Slovenian presidency of the Council of the EU (second half of 2021). The two countries will continue their collaborative efforts to promote the integrated coastal zone management and to enhance their cooperation in the framework of EUSAIR, EUSALP, the Alpine Convention, with a view of strengthening their environmental dimension, as well within the Commission for the protection of the Adriatic Sea, where a Marine Spatial Plan for Adriatic could also be addressed. They will also continue their engagement in implementing the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and ensuring the good environmental quality of marine waters, including by fighting against marine litter.

3. **Climate and COP26:** Italy and Slovenia intend to accelerate the transition to climate neutrality by 2050, in line with the Paris Agreement, and support the implementation of the European Green Deal, considered as the core driver for sustainable growth, innovation and jobs. They firmly support the efforts to implement the enhanced emissions reduction target of 55% by 2030 at EU level in line with the European Climate Law. They will cooperate to increase the global ambition on climate in view of the Slovenian presidency of the Council of the EU and of the Italian co-Presidency of COP 26, in partnership with UK.
4. **Biodiversity:** Italy and Slovenia will work together to contribute to an ambitious Global Strategic Framework post 2020, in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, with particular attention to the 2030 target to protect at least 30% of land and seas, 10% of which under strict protection. They will enhance their bilateral cooperation on management of Natura 2000 network between National Parks and other protected areas, including the UNESCO Biosphere Reserves with a view to promote them also in a transboundary perspective.
5. **Transboundary environmental impact assessments:** the two countries will enhance their fruitful cooperation under the Espoo Convention and SEA Protocol and will develop further procedures with technical consultations and promotion of good practices.

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERY

1. **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP):** Italy and Slovenia emphasize the importance to achieve promptly a final agreement on the post 2020 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which combines high sustainability standards and adequate support to farmers.
2. **Protection of Italian and Slovenian geographical indications:** the parties agree to keep and enhance the already existing communication channel among the competent administrations in order to achieve tangible results in terms of contrast to the illegal trade of counterfeited products;
3. **Food labeling:** Italy and Slovenia agree to contribute to a wider harmonization of the European legislative framework on the matter, improving transparency of the information to consumers and safeguarding traditional and Mediterranean products;
4. **Fishery:** Both sides reiterate the importance of working together on the finalization of the new multiannual management plans for small pelagic and demersal species within the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). They agree also on the cooperation under Common Fisheries policy and through the ADRIATICA Regional group and the exchange of relevant data such as sales notes and cooperation in the field of data collection framework surveys at sea (MEDIAS, MEDITS and SOLEMON).

SCIENCE AND UNIVERSITY

1. **Science:** also with the aim of better planning and establishing a more effective collaboration in the future EU Framework program Horizon Europe, the two sides will look at concrete opportunities for enhancing their bilateral cooperation within the framework of a new Scientific and Technological Cooperation Work Program, based on the Agreement between

the Government of the Government of the Italian Republic and the Republic of Slovenia on Scientific and Technological Co-operation, signed in 1998. For the same purpose, the two sides will continue with the co-organization of traditional bilateral "Slovenian and Italian Research days" as one of best practices for exchanges among researchers as well as on R&I policy level. Moreover, the two countries will continue the well-established collaboration in the domain of supercomputing within the framework of the European High-Performance Computing Joint Undertaking. In particular, thanks to Vega and Leonardo, two of the eight super-computers that form the EuroHPC network, science, academics, industry and public sector will have access to top computing infrastructure in both countries.

2. **University:** Italy and Slovenia will further strengthen bilateral cooperation in the areas of higher education and mobility, also taking into account the common membership to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Convention). Cooperation in the academic sector will be also enhanced within relevant EU programs, namely Erasmus+ and the framework of the existing cultural bilateral agreements.

A mid-term assessment of activities in the fields of mutual interests will be carried out prior to the next Coordination Committee of Ministers.

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