



Declaration of Intent on joining the Network for a Litter Free Adriatic and Ionian Coast and Sea

Mindful that **Marine Litter poses a significant and growing threat** to the Adriatic and Ionian coasts and seas that we all share, cherish and benefit from;

Fully aware that the Marine Litter problem is rooted in our prevailing production and consumption patterns, poor stakeholders understanding of their co-responsibility in generating and solving the problem, failure to comply with and enforce legislation, poor waste management– and therefore **here to stay as a major challenge for many years to come**;

Recognizing that Marine Litter, as a problem that travels and expands beyond borders, **can be solved only by coordinated and harmonized actions at local, national, regional and international levels**;

Guided by the strategic frameworks, goals and measures set by the European Union's Marine Strategy Framework Directive – within which Marine Litter is included as Descriptor 10 of Good Environmental Status, as well as the UNEP/MAP Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean;

Recognizing that global, regional, national strategies, plans, policies and legislations provide clear direction and a framework for action but the **real change and tangible environmental improvements will happen only when people change their mindsets and behavioral patterns and undertake action at individual and community level**;

Acknowledging the European Union and Barcelona Convention Contracting Parties' **call for enhanced regional and sub-regional cooperation in order to ensure a** coordinated, coherent and integrated approach to achieve the good environmental status of the marine environment and effectively design and implement measures to address marine litter;

Appreciating other developed institutional frameworks for cooperation on common environmental issues among the countries of the Adriatic and Ionian region, including: the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region; the inter-governmental Adriatic-Ionian Initiative; the Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas;

Realizing that the attainment of transboundary cooperation **at operational level** for addressing marine litter effectively requires more than the above agreements and frameworks for cooperation among and between countries of the Adriatic-Ionian macroregion;

Recalling that transboundary cooperation **enhances learning opportunities and know-how exchanges; inspiration and motivation** through sharing of experiences and lessons learned; **effectiveness and creativity** from diversity and complementarity; **efficiency and coherence** through coordination and joint planning;



Motivated by the **successful cooperation accomplished within the IPA Adriatic DEFISHGEAR** (Derelict Fishing Gear Management System in the Adriatic region) project – the first sub-regional project dealing with the Marine Litter issue in the Adriatic and Ionian region, establishing and piloting comprehensive, coordinated and harmonized marine litter monitoring throughout the region as well as marine litter related measures mainly but not exclusively targeting the fisheries sector;

Acknowledging the great **value of the contacts and working relationships developed during the project**, that should be maintained and further developed through follow up, collective and collaborative projects and initiatives;

And

Mindful that **continuity, coherence and cross-fertilization among and between projects and/or initiatives dealing consecutively or in parallel with common issues are critical in efficiently and effectively achieving lasting positive impacts and changes;**

We, as representatives of our institutions and/or organizations,

Decide to **join the Litter Free Network for an Adriatic and Ionian Coast and Sea**, a network that shares a common vision and is determined to contribute to the fulfillment of this vision by committing to:

- **Actively share updates, information and ideas within the network;**
- **Exchange knowledge, experiences and expertise, to the extent possible;**
- **Seek and/or create opportunities for a collective and collaborative effort in tackling Marine Litter in the Adriatic-Ionian macroregion;**
- **Invite all institutions and individuals who share the aforementioned convictions, vision and commitment to join and enhance the Network with their ideas, energy and determination.**