

# Other Cooperation Initiatives in the Mediterranean

## 1. NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative

Instability in the Mediterranean region is important to NATO Allies and partners both for humanitarian and geopolitical reasons as security in the Middle East and North Africa is organically related to security in Europe. NATO has developed a network of partnership with seven southern Mediterranean countries under the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD), as well as with four countries of the Gulf region through the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). Within these frameworks, these countries: share insights on areas of common interest or concern through political consultation and intelligence sharing; participate in exercises and training for future missions; contribute to current operations; support research on new capability development; integrate gender perspective into security and defence; fight against corruption in the defence sector; enhance efforts to destroy or control arms. The MD started in 1994 with five participating countries, which included Egypt, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, followed a few years later by Algeria and Jordan. The Dialogue has the following features: it is progressive in terms of participation and content; it is generally bilateral in the NATO+1 format but also admits multilateral meetings in the NATO+7 format; the same basis is offered to all the partners according to a non-discrimination principle; however each country can decide to intensify its own participation in the spirit of self-differentiation through an Individual Cooperation Programme (ICP) and NATO will not impose the

extent of the cooperation; it is complementary to other regional or international initiatives; it has both a political and practical dimension. Until 2011, the overall responsibility for the MD fell to the Mediterranean Cooperation Group (MCG), established at the Madrid Summit in 1997. It was then replaced by the Political and Partnerships Committee, which is responsible for all partnerships. The Committee meets at the level of Political Counsellors on a regular basis to discuss all matters related to the Dialogue including its further development. At the 2004 Istanbul Summit, NATO's Heads of State and Government elevated the MD to a genuine partnership through the establishment of a more ambitious and expanded framework, which considerably enhanced both the MD's political and practical cooperation dimensions. Consultations of the 29 Allies (Montenegro became NATO's 29th member on 5 June), and seven MD countries take place on a regular basis on a bilateral and multilateral level, at ministerial, ambassadorial and working level formats. The political dimension also includes visits by NATO Senior Officials, including the Secretary General (SG) and the Deputy SG, to MD countries. The main purpose of these visits is to conduct high-level political consultations with the relevant host authorities on the way forward in NATO's political and practical cooperation under the Dialogue. The new Strategic Concept, adopted at the Lisbon Summit in 2011, identifies cooperative security as one of three key priorities for the Alliance. Practical cooperation in the MD includes seminars, workshops and other practical activities in the fields of modernization of the

armed forces, civil emergency planning, crisis management, border security, small arms & light weapons, public diplomacy, scientific and environmental cooperation, as well as consultations on terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The military dimension of the practical cooperation includes invitations to Dialogue countries to observe – and in some cases participate – in NATO/PfP military exercises, attend courses and other academic activities at the NATO School (SHAPE) in Oberammergau (Germany) and the NATO Defense College in Rome (Italy), and visit NATO military bodies. The Individual and Partnership Cooperation Programme (IPCP), which replaces the previous Individual Cooperation Programme (ICP) framework document, is aimed at enhancing bilateral political dialogue as well as tailoring cooperation with NATO according to key national security needs. Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia have all agreed tailored ICPs with NATO. At the 2014 Wales Summit two important initiatives were endorsed: the Partnership Interoperability Initiative and the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) Initiative. The first provides measures to ensure that the connections built up over years of operations and exercises will be deepened so that partners will contribute to future NATO-led operations (currently only Jordan has access to enhanced cooperation). The DCB Initiative is demand-driven and aims at NATO's commitment with partners. This package includes: seven areas of cooperation (cyber defence, military exercises, Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices cooperation, border security...); the in-

invitation to participate in the 2015 NATO Cyber Coalition exercise (the first MD countries to do so); and a Science for Peace and Security (SPS) project on Counter-IED. The Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme is a policy tool that enhances cooperation and dialogue with all partners, based on scientific research, innovation, and knowledge exchange. It provides funding, expert advice, and support to security-relevant activities. More than 30 SPS activities are held with MD countries covering areas such as cyber-defence training for Morocco, the implementation of a cyber-defence strategy in Jordan, the development of advanced security technologies in Israel and the creation of a regional crisis management centre in Mauritania. Unlike the MD, the ICI only focuses on practical cooperation and it was launched in 2004. It is addressed to the Gulf Countries and, as it stands, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have all joined the Initiative. Based on the principle of inclusiveness, the Initiative is, however, open to all interested countries of the broader Middle East region who subscribe to its aims and content, including the fight against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Initiative offers bilateral activities that countries can choose from, which comprise a range of cooperation areas: tailored advice on defence transformation; military - to - military cooperation to contribute to interoperability through participation in selected military exercises and through participation in selected NATO and PIP exercises and in NATO-led operations on a case-by-case basis; cooperation in the fight against terrorism, including through intelligence sharing; cooperation regarding border security in connection with terrorism, small arms and light weapons and the fight against illegal trafficking; and civil emergency planning. With the approval of the new partnership policy at the meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers in Berlin in April 2011, all NATO partners will have access in principle to the same range and number of activities. This will dramatically expand the number of activities accessible to ICI countries. ICI partners have also increasingly demonstrated their readiness to participate

in NATO-led operations, acting as security providers. Today, several ICI partners actively contribute to the NATO ISAF operation in Afghanistan. Following the launch of Operation Unified Protector (OUP) in Libya, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates promptly provided air assets to the operation and were recognized as contributing nations, playing a key role in the success of the operation. Finally, within the Parliamentary dimension of NATO a Mediterranean and Middle East Special Group (GSM) was created in 1996 as a forum for parliamentarians of NATO and the MENA region to discuss security issues. The GSM conducts seminars, bringing together parliamentarians from NATO countries with their counterparts in the region, to explore specific topics and to consider the annual GSM Report. The Group also undertakes an annual visit to a country in the region.

#### *Main Events in 2018*

- 16 January, Brussels, Belgium: Qatar and NATO sign a security agreement in a ceremony attended by Brigadier General Tariq Khalid M. F. Alobaidli, Head of the International Military Cooperation Department, Armed Forces of the State of Qatar, and NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller. The security agreement provides the framework for protecting the exchange of classified information. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_150794.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_150794.htm?selectedLocale=en)
- 22-23 January, Kuwait City, Kuwait: NATO and Gulf partner countries hold the fourth ICI Policy Advisory Group meeting for the first time in the recently inaugurated NATO-ICI Regional Centre in Kuwait. Participants from NATO and ICI countries as well as representatives from Saudi Arabia, Oman and the Gulf Cooperation Council meet to discuss the achievements of their cooperation and how to further enhance it, recognizing the interlink of the security and stability between the Gulf region and the Euro-Atlantic area. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_151144.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_151144.htm?selectedLocale=en)
- 23 January, Istanbul, Turkey: Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller, in a two-day visit to Turkey, highlights

the vital role of the country in NATO in a conference given at the National Defence University in Istanbul. Gottemoeller thanks Turkey for its contributions to the alliance, including counterterrorism expertise, deployments to Afghanistan and Kosovo and support to Ukraine. Besides this, she points out the ways in which NATO is contributing to Turkey's security, namely, missile batteries for air defence, AWACS surveillance flights and increased naval presence in the Black Sea and eastern Mediterranean. Mrs. Gottemoeller also visits some of NATO facilities and meets with Turkey's Deputy Foreign Minister, Ambassador Ahmet Yildiz; General Ümit Dündar, Deputy Chief of the General Staff, and other high-level officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence.

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- 28-30 January, Tel Aviv, Israel: NATO Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy, Ambassador Alejandro Alvargonzález, visits Israel in the framework of the Mediterranean Dialogue Partnership. During the visit, he meets with senior civilian and military officials at the Foreign Affairs and Defence Ministries, with whom he discusses the practical cooperation between NATO and Israel and the current developments in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. He also meets with several Israeli MPs.

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- 13 February, Kuwait City, Kuwait: The NATO-ICI Regional Centre hosts the first training course on the protection of critical energy infrastructure with the attendance of 30 participants. During one week, the participants explore threats critical to energy infrastructure and resilience measures through lectures by internationally renowned experts. Among the topics addressed are evolving cyber threats to energy infrastructure, NATO's and national approaches to resilience, the link between energy and geopolitics, and methodologies for risk analysis and mitigation. The course has been organized by Kuwaiti authorities, the NATO School in Oberammergau, the US Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, the NATO Energy Security Centre of Excel-

lence in Vilnius and NATO's Emerging Security Challenge Division.

[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_151883.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_151883.htm?selectedLocale=en)

▪ 19 February, Brussels, Belgium: under the name of "Enhancing Jordan's Capacity for Crisis Management, Continuity of Government and Exercises," NATO launches a Defence Capacity Building Project for Jordan. The project will assist the Jordanian National Centre for Security and Crisis Management to achieve full operational capability during a three-year period. It will also enhance Jordan's capacity in national resilience, continuity of government and crisis management. The signing ceremony was attended by Brigadier General Adnan Al-Abbadi, Vice Chairman of the Jordanian National Center for Security and Crisis Management, and NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General Dr. John Manza. The project has been made possible by the contributions of the Netherlands, Germany, Norway and Turkey to the NATO Defence Capacity Building Trust Fund.

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▪ 6 March, Amman, Jordan: NATO Secretary General (SG) Jens Stoltenberg visits Jordan and meets with Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi and with King Abdullah II. During the visit, the SG praises Jordan's contributions to the regional and international security and thanks Jordan for hosting NATO training for Iraqi forces. He also reassures NATO's commitment to the international fight against terrorism and to work with Jordan by strengthening Jordan's defence capabilities, including in crisis management, exercises, border security, cyber security and countering improvised explosive devices.

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▪ 7 March, Brussels, Belgium: NATO Secretary General (SG) Jens Stoltenberg welcomes the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani to NATO Headquarters in Brussels. The two leaders discuss the security situation in the Gulf region as well as their partnership. In addition, they sign an agreement allowing NATO forces and personnel to enter and transit Qatar and to use the Al-Udeid Air Base, in this way

facilitating NATO missions and operations in the region, including the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan.

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▪ 12 March Brussels, Belgium: Health and civil protection experts from Mauritania, France and Romania discuss ways for boosting NATO's support to Mauritania's ability to plan for civil emergencies and telemedicine. In a meeting at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, the experts discuss how to develop new civil emergency units in remote areas. Through its Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme, NATO has already supported crisis management centres in Nouakchott and three other regions of the country, helping national authorities to quickly respond to crises and coordinate an appropriate response.

[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_152791.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_152791.htm?selectedLocale=en)

▪ 19-20 March, Algiers, Algeria: NATO's Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy, Ambassador Alejandro Alvargonzález, visits Algeria on 19 and 20 March in the framework of the Mediterranean Dialogue. During the visit, he meets with Foreign Minister Mr. Abdelkader Mes-sahel, with the Inter-Ministerial Committee in charge of bilateral cooperation between Algeria and NATO as well as the Permanent Committee for Military Cooperation with NATO. The meetings focus on the state of Algeria-NATO's cooperation and how to further enhance political consultations and practical cooperation, including through establishing a new IPCP.

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▪ 21-23 March, Rabat, Morocco: NATO's Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy, Ambassador Alejandro Alvargonzález, visits Morocco on 21-23 March, in the framework of the Mediterranean Dialogue. During the visit, Ambassador Alvargonzález meets with Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nasser Bourita, the Minister Delegated for National Defence, Abdellatif Loudiyi, the Foreign Policy Advisor of the King of Morocco, Amb. Youssef Amrani and other senior officials. The discussions focus on the state of Morocco-

NATO's cooperation and how to further enhance political consultations and practical cooperation, including through the establishment of a new IPCP.

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▪ 29-30 May, Nouakchott, Mauritania: General Petr Pavel, Chairman of the NATO Military Committee visits Nouakchott in the first ever visit by such a NATO authority. During the visit, the Chairman meets with the President of the Republic of Mauritania, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, the Chief of Defence of the Mauritanian Armed Forces, Major General Mohamed Ahmed Cheikh El Ghazouani, the Minister of Defence, Mr. Diallo Mamadou Bathia, high representatives from the G5 Sahel executive secretariat as well as other senior military officials. Discussions focus on the increasing cooperation between NATO and Mauritania and the Projecting Stability initiative as well as the efforts that the African country is making to deal with regional security issues.

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▪ 11 June, Rome, Italy: NATO Secretary General (SG) Jens Stoltenberg meets with Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte and praises its contributions to the Alliance in places such as Afghanistan, Kosovo, Montenegro and the Baltic as well as for its role in driving NATO's adaptation to threats from the south by hosting a Joint Force Command in Naples and its Hub for the South. The SG also discusses the issue of fair burden-sharing within the Alliance and praises Italy for stepping up its contributions.

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▪ 28 June, Brussels, Belgium: NATO Secretary General (SG) Jens Stoltenberg discusses NATO-EU cooperation with European leaders at the European Council. The SG refers to the increasing cooperation between both organizations in areas such as the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean as well as NATO support to EU Operation Sophia. He also highlights the challenges in Western Balkans and the importance of the transatlantic relationship.

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- 10-13 July, Brussels, Belgium: NATO Brussels Summit takes place between 10 and 13 July. Regarding the Mediterranean region, decisions are taken to establish a new NATO Mission in Iraq and a Package on the South is agreed. In addition, leaders decide to strengthen the support for Afghanistan, to develop accession talks' with Skopje and to increase cooperation with the EU.  
[https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_f2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2018\\_11/20181105\\_1811-factsheet-key-decisions-summit-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_f2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_11/20181105_1811-factsheet-key-decisions-summit-en.pdf)
- 13 July, Brussels, Belgium: The German Marshall Fund (GMF) presents a study on NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue partnership programme under the title of "The Future of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue: Perspectives on Security, Strategy and Partnership" to an audience of experts, academics, journalists and NATO officials. The study constitutes an independent assessment of the value and prospects of this programme in light of recent changes in the security environment of the region and is based on interviews with officials and experts from the MENA region and NATO.  
[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_157523.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_157523.htm?selectedLocale=en)
- 14 September, Brussels, Belgium: An inter-ministerial delegation from the Kingdom of Bahrain visits NATO Headquarters to discuss with NATO Political Affairs and Security Policy Division the development of an IPCP and find areas of cooperation relevant to both sides.  
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- 17-18 September, Brussels, Belgium: A high-level inter-ministerial delegation from Qatar visits NATO Headquarters to discuss the renewal of the NATO-Qatar IPCP. Headed by Abdulrahman al-Khulaifi, Head of the Mission of the State of Qatar to NATO, and Nicola de Santis, Head of the NATO Middle East and North Africa Section of the Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, the delegations discuss the future development of their joint cooperation by identifying new areas.  
[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_158272.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_158272.htm?selectedLocale=en)
- 30 September-1 October, Kuwait City, Kuwait: NATO and Kuwait hold the first annual review of activities at the

NATO-ICI Regional Centre. The inter-ministerial delegation from the State of Kuwait acting as focal point for the implementation of NATO-ICI Regional Centre's Action Plan meet with their counterparts from NATO International Staff divisions, International Military Staff and Strategic Commands. The meeting serves the purpose of reviewing the outcomes of the activities taking place at the centre, identify specific activities to be carried out the following year and ways to enrich the cooperative learning environment.

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- 8 October, Zagreb, Croatia: NATO Secretary General (SG) Jens Stoltenberg meets with the President of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, and Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic, during a visit to the country. The SG praises Croatia's contribution to the alliance, such as Croatian troops serving in Lithuania and Poland and in NATO missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan as well as in Operation Sea Guardian. They also discuss the security situation in the Western Balkans.

[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_158996.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_158996.htm?selectedLocale=en)

- 8-9 October, Brussels, Belgium: NATO hosts Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) experts from seven Mediterranean partner countries for a two-day seminar aimed at promoting regional and bilateral cooperation. The event allows discussions on challenges emanating from SALW proliferation and illicit trafficking in the region and to identify future ways for cooperation between NATO and its partners to counter this phenomenon.

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- 20-21 November, Brussels, Belgium: The NATO Joint Intelligence and Security Division hosts Intelligence experts from Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania and Morocco at the 16th Annual NATO-Mediterranean Dialogue Conference. The event provides a forum for exchanging views and insights on the challenges in the Mediterranean region. The aim is to reinforce relations between NATO and Mediterranean partners in the field of intelligence, building personal links and relationships within the intelligence community. NATO under-

stands that Transatlantic and Mediterranean security are inextricably linked and is determined to implement a 360-degree approach to security.

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- 22-23 November, Rome, Italy: NATO Secretary General (SG) Jens Stoltenberg attends the Mediterranean Dialogue Conference to speak about the shared challenges in the region. The SG shares a panel with Italian Defence Minister Elisabetta Trenta and Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohamed Ali Alhakim. Mr. Stoltenberg highlights the importance of enhancing the resilience of partners and that "prevention is better than intervention." In addition, the SG praises Italy for its valuable contributions to regional peace and security and for driving NATO's adaptation to threats from the South.

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- 26 November, Brussels, Belgium: Kuwait inaugurates its first diplomatic mission to NATO in a ceremony attended by Kuwait's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Khaled Aljarallah and NATO Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy, Ambassador Alejandro Alvargonzález.

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- 12 December, Brussels, Belgium: Secretary General (SG) Jens Stoltenberg receives King Abdullah II of Jordan at NATO Headquarters. During the meeting they discuss Jordan-NATO's partnership as well as regional security challenges. The King also participates in a meeting of the North Atlantic Council where he speaks about the challenges faced by MENA countries. The SG praises Jordan's role in promoting regional security through its active role in the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and for the high level cooperation established between both partners.

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## 2. OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation

The relationship between the OSCE and its MPCs dates back to the Hel-

sinki Final Act in 1975, which recognized that security in Europe is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean as a whole. Immediately after Helsinki, Mediterranean non-participating states were invited to a specific meeting on Mediterranean issues related to economic, social, environmental, scientific and cultural topics. It was at the 1993 Rome Ministerial Council meeting when Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Morocco and Tunisia requested a closer cooperation and finally became partners for cooperation in 1995 (Jordan joined in 1998). In 1994 an informal contact group of experts met to conduct a dialogue with MPCs to facilitate the exchange of information of mutual interest and generate ideas: the Mediterranean Contact Group (MCG). Within the political framework of this relationship, besides the MCG, the main elements are: the annual OSCE Mediterranean Conference, certain annual OSCE events, the OSCE PA Mediterranean Forum and the visit by the Secretary General (SG). The OSCE Mediterranean Conference is generally attended by international organizations, parliamentarians, academics and NGOs, and it provides a place for the exchange of ideas and exploring new ways to enhance cooperation. At the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting, partners engage in high-level meetings with the OSCE Troika (incoming, current and past Chairmen-in-Office) and the OSCE SG. In 2003, OSCE participating states decided to extend the fields for cooperation with partners (counterterrorism, border issues, economic and environmental activities, trafficking in human beings, election observation, media freedom) besides encouraging them to voluntarily implement OSCE commitments. Since 2007, a special fund has been created to attend to Partners' needs to participate in specific activities. The wave of upheavals that swept across the southern Mediterranean as of 2011 confirmed the need to reinforce and adapt the Partnership to assist Partners on their way to democracy and stability. The Contact Group serves at the main venue for regular dialogue with the Partners. It generally meets seven times a year at ambassadorial level and its chairman is generally the incoming chair of the

OSCE. It discusses topics relevant to OSCE Partners or members in the three OSCE dimensions: politico-military, economic and environmental and human. Since 2011, Partners have displayed a readiness to share relevant information and developments within the group while OSCE participating states have reaffirmed their support to share their expertise, experience and OSCE toolbox for democratic transition. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) enhances relations between participating states and MPCs from a parliamentary perspective. MPCs are invited to participate in OSCE PA conferences, and also to country observation missions offering them the opportunity to study best practices and democratic processes.

#### *2018 OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, 17th Winter Meeting*

- 22-23 February, Vienna, Austria: The 17th Winter Meeting takes place in Vienna with the participation of 240 parliamentarians from 53 countries. The event consists of meetings of the Assembly's Standing Committee and the General Committees and two joint sessions of the General Committees. In the first joint session, OSCE PA President George Tsereteli appeals to revive "the spirit of détente and dialogue" at the basis of the founding of OSCE in 1975. Vincenzo Amendola, Italy's Undersecretary of State of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, calls for finding a solution to the crisis in Ukraine and to all protracted conflicts. Finally, OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger shares his intentions and views on making the OSCE "fit for purpose." Hakim Benchamach, Speaker of the House of Council of the Kingdom of Morocco stresses his country's cooperation with the OSCE and its commitment to this partnership. The Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions holds a debate on "Upholding democracy in an age of 'fake news'" while the Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment holds another on the theme "Climate crisis: Developing long-term strategies to tackle climate change and its global consequences." The Commit-

tee on Political Affairs and Security debates "Arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation: Challenges and opportunities for the OSCE area" and addresses other topics such as cybersecurity, confidence building measures, terrorism and its links with organized crime, and the situation of minorities. On the margins of the meeting, the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration and the Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism meet to discuss ongoing and upcoming work.

<https://www.oscepa.org/documents/winter-meetings/2018-vienna-1/reports-21/3829-2018-winter-meeting-final-report/file>

#### *27th Annual Session of the OSCE PA*

- 7-11 July, Berlin, Germany: The 27th Annual Session of the OSCE PA features the theme "Implementing OSCE Commitments: The Role of Parliaments." The meeting sees the attendance of 300 parliamentarians from North America, Europe, Asia and North Africa. The main result of the assembly is the adoption of the Berlin Declaration with recommendations to national governments, parliaments and the international community in the fields of political affairs, security, economics, environment and human rights. Three resolutions and 16 supplementary items are adopted by the Assembly, addressing topics such as counter-terrorism, human trafficking, migration, security sector governance, gender-based violence, and countering propaganda. In addition, George Tsereteli is elected Assembly President until the end of the 2019 Annual Session and Peter Bowness, Kari Henriksen, Kristian Vigenin and Pascal Allizard are elected Vice-Presidents. During plenary sessions, reports are heard from OSCE PA Special Representative on Gender Issues Hedy Fry, OSCE PA Secretary General Roberto Montella and OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger. Lastly, the ad hoc committees on migration and terrorism meet on the margins and side events are held on topics including election observation, corruption and the environmental impacts of armed conflict.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YyGc-CexhzYTEPBFsI49-O0h6Lzca3W1/view>

*2018 Autumn Meeting of the OSCE PA and the Mediterranean Forum*

▪ 3-6 October, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: The Autumn Meeting is attended by 300 delegates, including 160 OSCE parliamentarians, and is held under the theme of "Promoting Security Dialogue in Central Asia and Beyond." The OSCE PA's Standing Committee of heads of national delegations meets on 5 October, with the attendance of OSCE PA President George Tsereteli, President of the Kyrgyz Republic Sooronbay Jeenbekov as well as other Kyrgyz high-level officials. Topics covered during the meeting include combating trafficking in human beings along migration routes, tackling the trafficking of illicit drugs, preventing the spread of terrorism, fighting corruption, the work of OSCE field operations in Central Asia, combating violence and discrimination against women, increasing youth and minority participation in public life, and promoting open government initiatives. Participants have stressed that responding to common transnational threats has had the effect of strengthening ties between the Central Asian countries and that cross-border cooperation in the region has helped build security for the whole OSCE area. They also discuss the ways that Central Asian and Mediterranean regions can learn from each other in many respects.

<https://www.oscepa.org/documents/autumn-meetings/2018-bishkek/3770-final-report-of-2018-bishkek-autumn-meeting/file>

▪ 4 October, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: During session two of the Parliamentary Conference the Mediterranean Forum takes place, under the theme "Geopolitics of Central Asia and the Mediterranean: Addressing Migration, Trade and Environmental Challenges." The forum gathers representatives from Algeria, Israel, Morocco and the Palestinian Legislative Council and is chaired by OSCE PA Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs Pascal Allizard. Among the priority issues for the OSCE and its Mediterranean partners addressed are combating human smugglers and traffickers, the fight against radicalization and violent extremism and migration management. Ambassador Katarina Za-

kova reports on the activities carried out by the Contact Group, including the celebration of five meetings in 2018 addressing issues such as energy security, cybersecurity, education and security sector governance and reform. Representatives from the Mediterranean partners express their concern over the security situation in the region, with special attention to ongoing conflicts. The Algerian Delegation offers to share practices on counter-terrorism and violent extremism, based on principles of solidarity and social justice. The Israeli Delegation questions the special status of Palestinian refugees and their right of return, urging a uniform treatment of all internationally recognized refugees. The Moroccan Delegation underlines the need to strengthen cooperation in the security area through multilateral policies and finding long-term solutions to common problems. Finally, the Palestinian Legislative Council representative, Abdelrahim Barham, discusses the current situation of Palestinians and urges the holding of meaningful talks between both sides to advance the peace process. During the Open Debate, all delegates discuss issues such as counter-terrorism, climate change, promotion of stability in Syria, Libya and Iraq, and a resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict. They also address the issue of migration and establishing links between humanitarian aid and development as well as the question of the Cyprus conflict.

*2018 OSCE Mediterranean Conference*

▪ 25-26 October, Malaga, Spain: The conference is held under the topic of "The importance of energy for economic growth and co-operation in the Mediterranean." The theme responds to the consideration that guaranteeing sustainable and reliable energy at affordable prices is the precondition for prospering economics and peace and security throughout the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners. The meeting, hosted by Spain and organized by the Slovakian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group and the OSCE Secretariat, brings together key energy experts from the public and private sector from both sides of the Mediterranean to discuss policies, develop strategies and identify

business opportunities. Participants pointed to the need of establishing open and competitive energy markets that ensure the security of supply and to develop new routes for transporting energy, improving integration of Mediterranean energy markets and strengthen regional cooperation at all levels, while maintaining environmentally sound conditions and protecting energy infrastructure. <https://www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/401024>

*Mediterranean Contact Group meetings*

▪ 19 March, Vienna, Austria: The first Mediterranean Contact Group meeting conducted under the 2018 Slovakian Chairmanship addresses energy security, the protection of critical energy infrastructure, the development and integration of renewable energy and the best use of digitalization for energy security. The representatives of the different OSCE Mediterranean partner countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia) point to a sustainable and reliable energy at affordable prices as a precondition for prospering economies and peace and security throughout the OSCE region. They also state that the energy domain is crucial and that indivisibility of Euro-Mediterranean security is more consequential for stability. Other issues being discussed are challenges such as blackouts due to extreme weather conditions, terrorist and cyber-attacks on physical and digital infrastructure and a changing energy mix.

<https://www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/375676>

▪ 7 May, Vienna, Austria: The Mediterranean Contact Group discussion focuses on perspectives on water management from both sides of the region. The discussion brings together a number of experts from Israel, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Slovakia, the Union for the Mediterranean and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River. The participants stress the interconnectivity of the societies on both sides and how this can contribute to make the partnership between both sides more strategic.

<https://www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/380050>

### *Annual Ministerial Council – 25th OSCE Ministerial Council*

- 6-7 December, Milan, Italy: The 25th OSCE Ministerial Council takes place under the Italian Chairmanship. This meeting of the central decision-making and governing body of the OSCE provides the Foreign Ministers of the 57 OSCE participating States an opportunity to review and assess the Organization's activities and strengthen the dialogue on security issues in the OSCE area. Decisions and declarations across the three OSCE security dimensions – politico-military, economic and environmental, and human dimensions – are agreed. Some of the decisions include a decision on safety of journalists; a decision on preventing and combating violence against women; a decision on human capital development in the digital era; a decision on strengthening efforts to prevent and combat child trafficking, including unaccompanied minors; a declaration on the digital economy a driver for promoting co-operation, security and growth; a declaration on the role of youth in contributing to peace and security efforts; or a declaration on security and co-operation in the Mediterranean, among others.  
[https://www.osce.org/event/mc\\_2018](https://www.osce.org/event/mc_2018)

### **3. 5+5 Dialogue**

The 5+5 Dialogue comes from a French proposal and was set up on 10 October 1990 during a ministerial meeting in Rome. It gathers the ten countries of the western Mediterranean Basin: five countries from the Arab Maghreb Union (Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Libya and Tunisia) and five members of the European Union (France, Spain, Italy, Portugal and Malta who joined in 1991). The 5+5 Dialogue has a flexible and informal nature. Over the years, it has been transformed from a merely political forum to one for strengthened regional and multi-disciplinary cooperation in the western Mediterranean. Its flexibility and informality have enabled a gradual opening up, and the participating ministers and senior officials now meet to discuss an increasing number of issues. Originally just a political compromise between Foreign

Ministers dealing with security and stability, as well as economic integration, it later expanded to include other spheres, such as Education, the Environment and Renewable Energies, Home Affairs (since 1995), Migration (since 2002), Inter-parliamentary Relations (since 2003), Defence (since 2004), Tourism (since 2006) and Transport (since 2007). Due to its practical and operational nature, it is a forum for the exchange of ideas and the launch of new initiatives. It can also capitalize on its restricted geographical scope, which is limited to the western Mediterranean. This initiative has encouraged the insertion of Libya and Mauritania in the regional context.

#### *Main meetings in 2018*

##### *Foreign Affairs*

- 21 January, Algiers, Algeria: The 14th Conference of Foreign Ministers of the 5+5 Dialogue takes place under the chairmanship of Abdelkader Messahel and Jean-Yves Le Drian, Algerian and French Foreign Ministers respectively. Apart from the remaining 5+5 Foreign Ministers, the conference also includes on the participation of Johannes Hahn, EU Commissioner on Neighbourhood Policy, Fathallah Sijilmassi, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean, Taieb Baccouche, Secretary General of the Arab Maghreb Union and Elisabeth Guigou, President of the Anna Lindh Foundation. The conference addresses the theme “Western Mediterranean: promoting a shared, sustainable and inclusive economic and social development face to the common challenges in the region.” In this context, topics discussed include migration, youth employment, mobility, training, female entrepreneurship, urbanization, climate change impact, and the threats posed by terrorism, radicalization and organized crime.  
<https://medthink5plus5.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/55-D%C3%A9claration-dAlger.pdf>

##### *Transport*

- 12 December, Nouakchott, Mauritania: The Ministers of Transportation of the 5+5 countries meet in Mauritania in the framework of the 9th Ministerial

meeting of transportation in the Western Mediterranean (GTMO 5+5). The ministers have decided to continue participating in the UfM Regional platform for transports connectivity and to invest more efforts to develop the multimodal central network of GTMO 5+5, paying especial attention to more disconnected countries such as Libya and Mauritania. They have also taken decisions to better study transport in the region and distribute the results of those studies, to improve road security in the western Mediterranean, to develop modern logistics infrastructures, to promote the establishment of effective and sustainable maritime connections, to improve the quality of public transportation, to ensure funds for the different projects to be implemented, to include environment sustainability as a cross-cutting issue and to keep an eye on the initiative of building a fixed connection between both sides of the Strait of Gibraltar. Finally, it is decided to meet again in 2020 under the new Maltese chairmanship.

<https://medthink5plus5.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Neuvieme-conference-des-ministres-GTMO-55-Relev%C3%A9-de-conclusions-2.pdf>

##### *Research, Innovation and Higher Education*

- 18-19 October, Trieste, Italy: The Italian National Institute of Oceanography and Applied Geophysics (OGS) hosts the 6th GSO Meeting of the 5+5 Dialogue for Research, Innovation and Higher Education. The delegates discuss the implementation steps of the current work plan which was approved in Tunis in 2017 for the biennium 2017-2018. They also begin the preparation of the forthcoming ministerial conference that will take place in Italy in the spring of 2019.

<http://www.fiveplusfivei.e.org/post/55-dialogue-gso-meeting>

- 4 December, Algiers, Algeria: Ministers of Education meet in Algiers in the framework of the 2nd Ministerial meeting of sustainable development of the blue economy, with the presence of the European Commission and the Union for the Mediterranean, and adopt a declaration to strengthen maritime regional co-

operation under the WestMED initiative. This Declaration of Algiers includes a roadmap to develop sustainable blue economy in the region to generate growth, create jobs and provide a better living environment. It also identifies the key programme initiatives to contribute to the WestMED cooperation strategy by learning from previous experiences. In addition, the European Commission and the French-Algerian co-presidency of the WestMED Initiative organized a stakeholder conference named “Towards concrete blue actions in the Western Mediterranean,” gathering over 300 participants. Cooperation and funding opportunities in the blue economy sector are presented and is been a great exchange of project ideas among regional maritime stakeholders, including businesses, researchers and institutes, national and local authorities.

<http://www.fiveplusfivei.eh.org/post/westmed-cooperation-strategy>

#### *Defence*

- 12 December, Rome, Italy: Italy chairs the 14th 5+5 Defence Initiative Ministerial Meeting. The Ministers of Defence take stock of the effects of their cooperation and conduct high-level analysis of security threats and challenges in the Mediterranean, paying particular attention to illegal trafficking and terrorism and areas such as the Sahel, from where many of these threats stem. In recent years, the 5+5 Defence Initiative has focused on strengthening the relations and cooperation in the sector of counter-terrorism, maritime surveillance, search and rescue and the use of military assets for civil protection purposes. There has also been space for joint training and mentoring activities in order to improve and standardize the operational procedures of all member countries. During 2018, 45 activities have taken place, 19 of which have been conducted under Italian leadership.

[https://www.difesa.it/EN/Primo\\_Piano/Pagine/woh%C3%B2p.aspx](https://www.difesa.it/EN/Primo_Piano/Pagine/woh%C3%B2p.aspx)

#### **4. Adriatic Ionian Initiative**

After the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, the fragmentation of the former Yugoslav

via and the growing tensions among ethnic, cultural and religious groups in the Balkan area, the EU, in its attempts to cope with these crises, promoted the “Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe” for south-eastern European countries hoping to join the Union in the future. Within this treaty, at the Finnish EU Summit in 1999, the Italian Government presented the “Adriatic Ionian Initiative.” The Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (All) was established at the Summit on the Development and Security of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, held in Ancona (Italy) in May 2000. At the end of the Conference, the Foreign Ministers of the participating countries, Italy, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece and Slovenia signed the “Ancona Declaration” in order to strengthen regional cooperation to promote political and economic stability, thus creating a solid base for the process of European integration. Today, the All has eight members: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. The initiative’s Chairmanship rotates every May/June according to alphabetical criteria. The Chairmanship of Greece started in June 2016 and ended in May 2017, with Italy taking over from June 2017 until May 2018. Following the recent EU approach to support multilateral sub-regional cooperation, the All started working, in 2010, on the idea of a Macro-Region for the Adriatic Ionian Region. Since then the All Participating states, started raising awareness regarding the need to establish a Macro-Region for the Adriatic Ionian basin. The European Council has given a mandate to the EU Commission to present a new “Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region” (EUSAIR) by the end of 2014. The EUSAIR has been endorsed by the Council on 24 October 2014 and is now in its implementation phase. Many years after the establishment of the All, the geopolitical environment has deeply changed. Slovenia in 2004 and Croatia in 2013 entered the EU. The other Adriatic-Ionian Eastside coastal Countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia), even if with different timeframes and conditions, are gradually approaching the EU within the Stabilization and Association Process framework, as a prelude to future EU

membership. After the overhaul of the All Round Tables approved in 2015, the highest political body of the All was also reformed. For the first time in Dubrovnik (12-5-2016) a double hat “Adriatic and Ionian Council / EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting” was held within the EUSAIR Forum. This now makes the two exercises (All and EUSAIR) inseparable from each other and mutually beneficial. The All focus for 2017 was on stakeholders and civil society with the ultimate goal of bringing them into the picture and making the subsidiarity principle work. The All is going to foster this process in two ways: firstly, by strengthening All Round Tables and connecting them strictly with the EUSAIR Thematic Steering Groups (TSGs). In order to make them effective, the All-PS finances the participation of selected experts coming from Adriatic and Ionian Civil Society (universities, NGOs, associations, chambers of commerce) and from local administrations; and, secondly, by connecting the All Round Tables with the EUSAIR Stakeholders Platform, as soon as it is fully operational.

#### *Main Events during the Italian Chairmanship*

Italy takes over the All Chairmanship as well as the Chairmanship of the EUSAIR in June 2017, in the framework of the Hellenic Chairmanship with the All/EUSAIR Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs that takes place within the EUSAIR Forum of Ioannina, and remains in this charge until June 2018. In this capacity, Italy seeks to further strengthen the All’s role as an “essential instrument for fostering regional cooperation.” In this regard, it seeks to complete Round Tables’ progressive alignment to EUSAIR Thematic Steering Groups and to strengthen policy dialogue and cooperation among All Member States, as well as with other regional cooperation fora, such as the Central European Initiative (CEI). In addition, attention is paid to strengthen dialogue with civil society through cooperation with the Adriatic-Ionian Fora (Cities, Chambers, Universities) as well as to enhance inter-parliamentary cooperation.

- 27-28 March, Brussels, Belgium: The 7th Meeting of the Governing Board of



the EUSAIR takes place in Brussels. National Coordinators hold discussions on the implementation of the Presidency Programme, including activities carried out until the moment and the preparation works for the next EUSAIR Forum that will take place in Catania on May 2018. They also discuss the situation of Thematic Steering Groups works and the support to key implementers by the EUSAIR Facility Point as well as on the next call of the Transnational ADRION Programme. In addition, the All Committee of Senior Officials is also held on 27 March. There, senior officials discuss All support to the contribution of stakeholders for implementing EUSAIR, the activities under the Italian Chairmanship and the next All/EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting.

<http://www.aai-ps.org/news/269-7th-eusair-governing-board-and-aai-committee-of-senior-officials-held-in-brussels-27-28-march>

- 3 May, Podgorica, Montenegro: The All Permanent Secretariat, represented by Secretary General Amb. Castellana, visits Montenegro on the occasion of the incoming Montenegrin All/EUSAIR Chairmanship that will start after the upcoming All/EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting of Catania in May. All SG meets with Srdan Darmanovic, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro to discuss the priorities of the Montenegrin Chairmanship and possibilities of cooperation.

<http://www.aai-ps.org/news/272-secretary-general-visit-to-the-incoming-aai-chairman-minister-darmanovic>

- 24-25 May, Catania, Italy: The Italian city hosts the 3rd Forum of EUSAIR under the slogan "Our region, our future." The event is attended by ministers from the eight EUSAIR countries, EU Commissioners, representatives of other EU institutions, regional and local governors and key implementers of the strategy. The forum focuses on topics such as connectivity, challenges and opportunities for transport and energy networks, funding mechanisms for the four strategic pillars (blue growth, connecting the region, environmental quality and sustainable tourism) as well as EUSAIR cross-cutting issues. The main purpose of the event is to reinforce collaboration and partnership among all stakeholders active in the re-

gion. In parallel, the All/EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting also takes place. At the end of the forum, the Catania Declaration is issued, where signing countries call for a stronger EU Cohesion Policy and more support to EUSAIR, on national governments to establish new programmes and frameworks that ensure the needed funds for implementing the strategy and to invest more in public goods. Finally, the Declaration approves the All enlargement to FYROM.

<http://www.aai-ps.org/about/working-structures?task=document.viewdoc&id=273>

#### *Main Events during the Montenegrin Chairmanship*

Montenegro takes over the Chairmanship in June 2018 and remains in this position until June 2019. During its presidency, it seeks to complete the alignment of common stances through the All Round Tables initiated by Italy as well as to strength ties within All countries and those seeking to become members of the organization. It also puts special attention on the promotion of EU standards and values and continues to support the European integration aspirations of Western Balkan countries. The activities planned during the one-year presidency are oriented towards developing the project-oriented dimension of the initiative in areas of common interest on the regional level, especially in the blue growth sector, transport and energy connections, sustainable tourism and culture, environmental and civil protection as well as inter-university cooperation. The priorities of the Montenegrin Chairmanship are: 1. Tourism; 2. Culture; 3. Environment 4. Blue growth; 5. Research and innovation; 6. Connectivity in the field of transport; 7. Civil protection; 8. Inter-university cooperation; 9. Regional youth cooperation in the fields of education, culture, youth policy and sports.

- 17-22 September, Ancona, Italy: The first UNIADRION – Adriatic Ionian Week takes place with a series of events, including the 1st Edition of UNIADRION Summer School "Migration issues in the Balkans," SUNBEAM (Structured University Mobility between the Balkans and Europe for the Adriatic-Ionian Mac-

roregion – Erasmus Mundus Project) and its final conference as well as UNIADRION General Assembly.

<http://www.aai-ps.org/news/281-uni-adriatic-ionian-week-17-22-september-ancona>

- 3-4 October, Podgorica, Montenegro: The first All Committee of Senior Officials is celebrated on 3 October. The All Permanent Secretariat Programme of Activities and the Priorities and indicative calendar of events of the Montenegrin Chairmanship are presented, putting emphasis on the connection and integration with the EUSAIR strategy. Other topics discussed are the state of the inclusion of North Macedonia in the organization and the appointment of its representative, Amb. Jon Ivanovski. During the 3 and 4 October the 8th Meeting takes place of the EUSAIR Governing Board where members discuss common future developments. They also discuss the outcome of the technical meeting of Pillar Coordinators, reporting on the OECD Seminar on Strengthening National Coordination Mechanisms for EUSAIR, EUSAIR Facility Point state of play, state of play and events of both ADRION Program and AI-NURECC Initiative and report of All Secretary General, Amb. Castellana, on the meeting of the CSO.

<http://www.aai-ps.org/news/290-aai-committee-of-senior-officials-and-8th-eusair-governing-board-held-in-podgorica-3-october-2018>

- 16-18 October, Split, Croatia: The first joint conference-fora of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce, Cities and Universities takes place in Croatia under the theme "Roots and paths – Past, Present and Future for the Adriatic-Ionian region." It represents an important step forward in building and consolidating the relationships between civil society, local, regional, national and European institutions. More than 120 institutions from the three civil society sectors take part in the event, with the aim of strengthening connectivity networks and creating greater prosperity by working in areas of mutual interest identified in EUSAIR Strategy. Participants discuss seven different thematic groups, namely blue growth, connecting the region, environmental quality and agriculture, sustainable tourism, wom-

en's entrepreneurship, social challenges and economic analysis.

<http://www.aii-ps.org/news/292-1-joint-conference-fora-of-the-adriatic-and-ionic-chambers-of-commerce-cities-and-universities-held-in-split-16th-18th-october-2018>

- 13 November, Budva, Montenegro: The All Round Table on Blue Growth and Maritime Cooperation takes place under the organization of the Montenegrin Chairmanship and in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Montenegro. The meeting is focused on "Small-scale coastal traditional fisheries – challenges and opportunities for local community development through the link of fisheries and tourism." Experts from the different All countries participate together with other experts from some regions and local authorities that present transnational projects on the issue.

<http://www.aii-ps.org/news/289-aii-round-table-on-blue-growth-maritime-cooperation-budva-13-november-2018>

- 21 November, Tirana, Albania: The Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce organizes a Training Workshop on Creative and Cultural Industries in the EUSAIR area – "Adriatic Start-up School" model, in collaboration with the Durres Chamber of Commerce. The main aim of the initiative is to support dialogue in the field of culture through the identification of issues of common interest as well as sharing best practices to support artistic entrepreneurship, creative start-ups and contemporary festivals. The event counted on the support and participation of the All, through Amb. Fabio Pigliapoco, Senior Advisor of the All, who highlights the organization's project "E-capital – Start-up school." The event counts on the participation of more than 70 professionals and students as well as representatives of the European institutions. The workshop takes place in the framework of a two-day Forum on EU Policies and EU Territorial Cooperation Opportunities focused on Technology, Innovation and Youth in the Adriatic-Ionian area.

<http://www.aii-ps.org/news/294-training-workshop-on-creative-and-cultural-industries-adriatic-start-up-school-model-tirana-21-november-2019>

- 3-4 December, Zagreb, Croatia: The Heads of Government of the CEI member states meet for their annual summit to discuss current challenges in the region under the topic "Building security, boosting economy, enabling prosperity." All participates in the event through its Secretary General Amb. Giovanni Castellaneta, who highlights the existent room for synergies and information and experiences exchange between inter-governmental and multilateral initiatives in issues such as migration and unaccompanied children following a bottom-up process. Other issues discussed include the question of Ukraine, brain drain or climate change, and the need to address them through "regional cooperation."

<http://www.aii-ps.org/news/295-aii-secretary-general-amb-castellaneta-at-cei-summit-zagreb-3-4-december-2018>

## 5. The League of Arab States

The League of Arab States is an association of 22 countries established in 1945 with the aim of improving coordination among its members on matters of common interest. The founding members of the League (Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Yemen) agreed to seek closer cooperation on issues regarding economics, communication, culture, nationality, social welfare and health. The LAS traditionally embodies both the idea of Pan-Arabism (the principle of an Arab homeland) and Arab nationalism (respect of each member state's sovereignty). Among LAS' main achievements the 1950 Joint Defence and Economic Cooperation Treaty; 1995 Draft Agreement on turning the Middle East into a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction; and the 1999 Arab Agreement on Combating Terrorism, should be mentioned. The highest body of the League is the Council, composed of representatives of member states, generally Foreign Ministers. Each member state has one vote, regardless of the size of the country. The Council meets twice a year, in March and September but it may also convene a special session at the request of two members. The General Secretariat runs the daily activities of the League. It is the

executive body of the Council and administrative body of the League. The Current SG is the Egyptian Ahmed About Gheit since July 2016, who succeeded Nabil el-Araby. The Arab league struggles with dysfunction and disunity among its members. In 2002 it achieved remarkable consensus on the Arab Peace Initiative. The 2011 Arab revolts in Middle East and North Africa offered an occasion to propose actions and initiatives: it backed the UN action against Gaddafi's forces in Libya and sent, for the first time in history, a mission of observers to Syria (after suspending its membership in the League).

Further information: [www.lasportal.org/en/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.lasportal.org/en/Pages/default.aspx)

### Main Events in 2018

- 7 March, Juba, South Sudan: South Sudanese authorities state their will to become an observer member of the League of Arab States. The country intends to take part in the vital issues of Arab countries, although it will not pay membership fees and will not decide upon the issues not affecting them directly. The South Sudanese ambassador to Egypt will also act as representative of the country before the League of Arab States.

- 9-15 April, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia: The 29th Ordinary Session of the Council of the League of Arab States at Summit Level, also called "Jerusalem Summit," takes place with six countries sending non-presidential level representatives. Issues such as Syria and the conflict within the Gulf Cooperation Council are left out of the discussions, focusing instead on Palestine. Among the topics addressed in the political level are the following: question of Palestine, situation in Libya and Yemen, support to Sudan, Somalia and Comoros, Iran's interference in Arab affairs, support to IDPs in Iraq, development of Arab counter-terrorism system, reform of the League of Arab States or support to Morocco's hosting of the 2026 World Cup. Among the economic and social affairs addressed are the implementation of the 3rd Arab Development Economic and Social Summit Resolutions, the Greater Arab Free Trade Area and developments of the Arab Customs Un-

ion, the Arab Document for the Protection and Development of Environment, the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, Syrian refugee crisis, Arab Strategy on Health and Environment and its strategic plan, establishment of the Arab Center for the Studies of Social Policy and Eradication of Poverty and the Arab Media Roadmap for Sustainable Development. Two final documents are agreed after the meeting: the Dhahran Declaration and the Document on Strengthening Arab National Security to Confront Common Challenges.

<http://www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/summits/Pages/default.aspx?Style=1&imgLib=ArabicSummit&RID=41#tab4>

- 23 May, Cairo, Egypt: The League of Arab States cancels the Memorandum of Understanding with Guatemala signed in 2013 after the Central American country moved its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. Cooperation between both parties is also interrupted.

- 12 June, New York, United States: Secretary General (SG) of the League of Arab States Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, meets with UN Secretary General (UNSG) Antonio Guterres in the framework of his visit to New York to participate in a high-level meeting between the UN and regional and subregional organizations. Questions addressed during the meeting include the Palestinian cause and the defence of the rights of Palestinians as well as the settlement of the crises in Syria, Yemen and Libya. The League of Arab States' SG also meets with the Arab Group at the UN, informing them of the efforts and positions adopted by the Council of the League on the Palestinian issue and in support of Palestinians against Israeli occupation.

<http://www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=1662>

- 11 September, Cairo, Egypt: The 150th Session of the Council of the League of Arab States at the ministerial level takes place at the headquarters of the General Secretariat, chaired by the Republic of Sudan. Main speakers include Dr. Dardiri Mohammed Ahmed Al Dakhiri, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Sudan, Dr. Adel Al-Jubeir, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Mr. Pierre Krenpol, Commissioner General of the UNRWA.

The session focus is on UNRWA and how to support it both politically and financially. Another issue addressed is the crisis with Iran.

<http://www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=1732>

- 25 September, New York, United States: Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, SG of the League of Arab States meets with Federica Mogherini, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Policy Security on the margins of the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Topics discussed include the Palestinian issue and other conflict scenarios in the region. The SG expresses appreciation for the EU position in the question on Palestine and its adherence to the two-state solution as well as for its support to the UNRWA. Lybia's situation is also discussed, pointing to the importance of fostering the work of the International Quartet to seek a political solution to the conflict. The SG also participates in the Consultative Meeting of Arab Foreign Ministers to exchange views on the most important topics on the agenda of the current session of the UNGA and how to achieve Arab interests and priorities as well as securing as much international support as possible for Arab visions, especially in the UN Security Council.

<http://www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=1745>

<http://www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=1746>

- 28 September, New York, United States: In the framework of the 73rd session of the UNGA Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, SG of the League of Arab States, meets with Mr. Johannes Hahn, EU Commissioner for the European Neighbourhood Policy and enlargement negotiations. The meeting addresses opportunities and areas for developing cooperation relations between Arab and European sides. Hahn points to the need of reviewing the current cooperation to encourage a more political collaboration and the support for existing agreements with these countries as well as to enhance regional cooperation in issues such as migration flows and stability. The SG also meets with the

UNSG Antonio Guterres to discuss the most pressing issues in the region, with especial attention to the question of Palestine and the needed international efforts to implement the relevant UN resolutions.

<http://www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=1761>

<http://www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=1763>

- 29-30 October, Athens, Greece: The third EU-Arab World Summit "Shared Horizons" takes place on the initiative of the Greek government to provide a representative and dynamic platform for debating strategies of Euro-Arab cooperation and partnership between the two major economic and political blocs. The summit brings together leaders, ministers and other high-ranking state officials from EU and Arab States, European Commission representatives as well as speakers and delegates from 30 countries. The topics address joint challenges faced by both sides, including the migration crisis, European and Arab policies in the Mediterranean, Africa and the Middle East, and environmental and energy issues.

<http://www.ekathimerini.com/234100/article/ekathimerini/news/greek-pm-opens-third-eu-arab-world-summit-on-regional-cooperation>

- 14 December, Cairo, Egypt: The Arab Parliament urges the League of Arab States to reinstate Syria's membership in the organization, a movement that needs the consensus of all the member states.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-arab-parliament-syria/arab-parliament-urges-arab-league-to-reinstate-syria-egypts-news-agency-says-idUSKBN1OD1YS>

## 6. Summit of the Southern European Union Countries

The 1st Mediterranean EU Countries' Summit took place in September 2016 in Malta, with the aim of enhancing their cooperation and to contribute to the dialogue on the future of the EU. The recovery from the crisis, high migration flows, the instability in the southern Mediter-

anean, as well as Brexit and Euro-skepticism need a united response from southern European countries. With the Athens Declaration, the Heads of State and Government (HoSG) of the Republic of Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain underline their strong commitment to European unity. They are convinced that the EU needs fresh energy in order to address the common challenges the Member States are facing and uphold its values of freedom, democracy and rule of law, as well as tolerance and solidarity. The countries therefore propose the following priorities and measures: ensuring the internal and external security of Europe, reinforcing cooperation in the Mediterranean and with African countries, fostering growth and investment in Europe, strengthening programmes for youth, and addressing the challenge of migration.

Athens Declaration 2016: [www.topontiki.gr/sites/default/files/declaration\\_athens\\_summit.pdf](http://www.topontiki.gr/sites/default/files/declaration_athens_summit.pdf)

#### *Main Meeting during 2018*

- 10 January, Rome, Italy: The 4th Southern EU Countries Summit takes place in Rome. A declaration is issued after the summit under the title of “Bringing the EU forward in 2018.” Some of the questions that the Heads of State and Government agree on are the need for a “more sovereign, social and democratic Europe” that can address the citizens’ needs; to keep working on the issues established in the Agenda in Rome 2017; to complete the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) in a more resilient, growth-friendly and democratic way with the final objective of making it a tool for sustainable and socially inclusive growth; to focus on EU policies identified as core priorities for action by citizens, including efficient functioning of the internal market as well as economic, territorial and social cohesion, a new approach on European public goods, joint management of migration, a European

Defence strategy, permanent investment in innovation and completion of the Single Market, the Innovation Union, the Digital Union, the Energy Union and the Capital Market Union; the need to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights; to increase responsibilities in security matters, including the fight against terrorism and addressing regional and global challenges with a special focus on the Mediterranean, Eastern neighbourhood and Africa; to find a viable comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem; commitment for a common European migration policy to prevent irregular flows as well as to address the root causes of mass migration in dialogue and cooperation with the countries of origin and transit; and, lastly, to support the implementation of citizens’ consultations on core priorities for the EU future as well as transnational lists for the EU Parliament.

<https://www.southeusummit.com/about/rome-declaration/>