

Chronologies

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. 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 di-

plomacy, 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 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. Follow-

ing 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.

NATO-Turkey Relations at the End of December 2017

Turkey-NATO relations become increasingly tense throughout the year, as Turkey strengthens its bonds with Russia. In addition to Western concerns regarding the 2016 coup attempt and its consequences, there are episodes that undermine détente such as the withdrawal of German troops from a Turkish-NATO base in June, and the withdrawal of Turkish soldiers from a joint military exercise in Norway in November. The greatest concern however comes from signing the agreement to buy four batteries of S-400 surface-to-air missiles from Russia. The system, designed to destroy aircraft and cruise and ballistic missiles, is incompatible with NATO's military architecture, and could hamper interoperability. Moreover, it would not be subjected to the constraints imposed by the alliance, which prevents Turkey from deploying such systems on the Armenian border, Aegean coast or Greek border. Turkey has turned to Russia after several NATO allies declined to renew their deployments of the Patriot missile-defence system. The country is strengthening its defences in response to both terrorist threats (linked to PKK or ISIS activities) and conflicts on its borders with Syria and Iraq. It has claimed that NATO's support to security has been inadequate. In addition to the agreement with Russia, Turkey signed an agreement with the

French-Italian consortium Eurosam-T for common defence strengthening. NATO officials keep a confident attitude regarding mutual bonds and obligations as partners.

Main Events in 2017

- 24 January, Kuwait City, Kuwait: Secretary General (SG) Stoltenberg inaugurates the NATO Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) Regional Centre in Kuwait. As the Alliance's first presence in the Gulf region, the Centre will be a vital hub for NATO's practical cooperation with Kuwait and other Gulf partners, as well as Saudi Arabia and Oman. Strategic analysis, civil emergency planning, military-to-military cooperation and public diplomacy will be the centre's issues of interest. After the ceremony, the 28 NATO members and its ICI partners meet to discuss common security challenges. In a joint press conference with Kuwaiti Authorities, the NATO SG praises Kuwait's efforts for common stability, as the first country to join ICI and to establish an Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme (ICPC) with NATO.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_140308.htm?selectedLocale=en

- 23 February, Nouakchott, Mauritania: A NATO team of experts visits the National Staff College (ENEM) to assess the progress of the Defence Education Enhancement Programme (DEEP) in the country. The DEEP programme has helped the military education system to develop an operational planning and design courses according to NATO standards. Course modules are on crisis management, counterterrorism and counterinsurgency in various languages. Mauritania was the first MD country to apply for an IPCP, and has asked for the programme to continue for three more years.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_141812.htm?selectedLocale=en

- 21-23 March, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina: Legislators from NATO member and partner countries meet to discuss prospects for EU and NATO enlargement to the Western Balkans, intra-regional relations and internal political developments. Under the title "The Western Balkans: Transition Challenge-

es, European Aspirations and Links to the MENA Region,” the event is organized by NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA) and jointly with the meeting of the NATO PA Mediterranean and Middle East Special Group. For the region, the primary impetus for reform is the prospect of Euro-Atlantic integration; yet the EU appears to be distracted from internal issues. The desire is expressed for Russia’s role in the region to be less destabilizing.

www.nato-pa.int/news/west-called-upon-overcome-balkans-fatigue-prevent-destabilisation-region

- 5 September, Naples, Italy: The NATO Strategic Direction South Hub is inaugurated. NSD-S Hub serves to face evolving security challenges as well as to promote cooperation with North Africa and Middle East partners. Dialogue through MD and ICI are part of the culture of cooperation and interoperability with the Alliance and Partner countries. The centre will deal with destabilization, terrorism, radicalization, migration, and environmental concerns. It aims to work with agencies outside of traditional NATO military structures such as regional development and crisis handling experts, academics, charitable organizations, law enforcement officials and non-governmental organizations. It is designed to take existing information and analysis and transform it into knowledge and information that is even more useful to stakeholders. Final capability is expected to be reached at the end of 2017.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_146835.htm?selectedLocale=en

- 2-3 October, Nouakchott, Mauritania: The 5th meeting of the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue-Policy Advisory Group (MD PAG) takes place. Besides NATO Allies and MD partners, high-level representatives from Libya, the EU Delegation in Mauritania, the G5 Sahel, the OSCE and the German Marshall Fund (GMF) participate as speakers. The meeting focuses on the state of play of NATO’s cooperation with MD partners and how to further enhance the partnership. Bilateral talks take place at the meeting between NATO representatives and Mauritanian officials from the government and the army.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_147563.htm?selectedLocale=en

- 24-25 October, Cairo, Egypt: The President of the NATO PA Alli meets in Cairo with Egyptian authorities and Arab regional institutions. During a conference for fellow legislators from Africa and the Middle East, he encourages them to take full advantage of cooperation opportunities with NATO’s new Strategic Direction South, and the Hub for the South in Naples, with the aim of combating terrorism. Alli meets with the SG of the Arab League and then with the President of the Arab Parliament. Possibilities of further cooperation are explored with both.

www.nato-pa.int/news/nato-pa-president-cairo-strengthen-cooperation-egypt-arab-institutions

- 26 October, NATO HQ, Brussels, Belgium: the first Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme for Algeria is launched, with the focus on implementing detection systems in the fight against terrorism. By providing cutting-edge technological solutions in support of the fight against terrorism, this SPS project contributes to NATO’s wider efforts to project stability beyond Alliance borders. Moreover, it creates expert networks, from north to south, and develops scientific skills and technology.

- 9-10 November, Naples, Italy: 57 participants in the annual NATO Regional Cooperation Course 2018 (NRCC 18) visit the Allied JFC Naples HQ and the NSD-S Hub location. The NRCC is the Alliance’s major educational outreach to our Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative partners and other countries from the region. Participants attend a series of comprehensive briefings, including panel discussion with experts from Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Kuwait. It is underscored that to tackle common threats, cooperation should be aimed at improving border security, safeguarding energy resources and reducing smuggling (human, weapons, drugs), which finances terrorism.

- 13-15 November, Kuwait City, Kuwait: A delegation of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly visits Kuwait City. Kuwait is pursuing constructive relations with all regional powers in efforts to mediate the recent tensions in the Gulf region and in the Gulf Cooperation Council. Rivalries between Iran and

Saudi Arabia, already present in Syria and Yemen, threaten to spill over into Lebanon.

- 22 November, NATO HQ, Brussels, Belgium: The agreement to launch Trust Fund IV for Jordan is signed. It is the latest phase of a NATO Partnership for Peace/MD Trust Fund and will last 24 months, with the main aim of helping the armed forces to build a self-sustaining ammunition demilitarization capacity. Trust Funds are voluntary, nationally-led and work under the framework of the NATO Partnership for Peace Trust Fund policy. Since 2000 about 30 projects have been funded, and it is proving to be a very effective tool, able to combine practical support with a high degree of public diplomacy.

- 23-24 November, Rome, Italy: A Joint Seminar of the Mediterranean and Middle East Special Group (GSM) and the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Defence and Security Cooperation (DSCTC) is held, with themes ranging from Libya and North Africa, the migration crisis, the situation in Syria and Iraq, the terrorist threat to Europe and the Western Balkans, and countering radicalization and violent extremism. Participants in the seminar include over 100 members of parliament from 35 countries from the Euro-Atlantic region, the Middle East and North Africa. What emerges is that complex security problems require multi-faceted approaches; human rights and rule of law must always be guaranteed. Italy’s Prime Minister Gentiloni recalls how Italy is struggling with the migration crisis and must not be left alone; he suggests that more people-to-people exchanges for the Mediterranean are needed to foster solidarity and build long-term stability.

www.nato-pa.int/news/coping-complex-security-problems-arising-mena-region-requires-multi-faceted-approaches

- 23-24 November, Rome, Italy: The 5th Shared Awareness and Deconfliction for the Mediterranean Sea (SHADE Med) takes place bringing together representatives from nations and organizations interested in or affected by the migratory phenomenon in the southern central Mediterranean, thus providing a forum to discuss and share knowledge and deconflict to coordinate their activities. Its primary goal is to provide a mecha-

nism aimed at deconflicting and where possible coordinating military and civilian resources, military and civilian operations and industry practices to achieve maximum efficiency and effectiveness in managing objectives related to the migratory phenomenon in the Mediterranean. The 2017 edition of the SHADE Med gathers 156 attendees from 32 countries and 94 organizations (including seven NGOs). Keynote speeches focus on the need for effective cooperation, in particular between law enforcement agencies and the military. The plenary session is followed by working group panels divided into six different topics (information exchange in the Mediterranean, the smuggling business model, communication systems and information exchange, training the Libyan Navy and Coastguard, migration and SOLAS and capacity building and legal aspects) where experiences, emerging trends and best practices are discussed. www.thesouthernhub.org/news/nsdshub-attended-the-5th-edition-shade-med.aspx

2. OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation

The relationship between the OSCE and its MPCs dates back to the Helsinki 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.

2017 OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, 16th Winter Meeting

- 23-24 February, Vienna, Austria: In the opening joint session, the values of the OSCE community – peace, security, prosperity and democratic values

– are underlined. Other issues recognized as relevant are the need to address the root causes of violent extremism, the gender dimension when dealing with refugees and migrants, and the improvement in promoting inclusivity and laws against discrimination based on religion, race and national origin. During the General Committee on Political Affairs and Security the main topics assessed are the threat of terrorism and cybersecurity, women's role in peacebuilding, the role of parliamentarians in strengthening cooperation, as well as the role of education and intercultural dialogue. The General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment focuses the debate on the management of natural resources, water security and combating climate change, which is increasingly influencing migration. The General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions stresses how human rights challenges also have to be faced in OSCE countries. The Human Dimension Committee focuses on freedom of expression, torture, gender and democracy, and hate crime. The debate in this session regards the protection of human rights amid growing populism. During the closing joint session, participants reaffirm that hyper-securitization is not an effective solution when ensuring security. Concern is expressed with relation to growing executive power, distrust and rising populism. A special debate is dedicated to the protection of human rights in times of crisis. The situation in Turkey is also addressed, and concern is expressed for the number of journalists imprisoned, and for the security and terrorism threats that the country faces. The Greek members call for burden sharing in the refugee and migrant crisis. During the Standing Committee, which consists of the OSCE PA's 57 Heads of National Delegations and Members of the Bureau, OSCE PA SG Montella argues in favour of increased engagement with the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation through visits to the region and possible election observation.

www.oscepa.org/documents/all-documents/winter-meetings/2017-vienna/reports-20/3513-2017-winter-meeting-final-report/file

26th Annual Session of the OSCE PA

- 5-7 July, Minsk, Belarus: The Annual OSCE PA meeting is devoted to “Enhancing mutual trust and co-operation for peace and prosperity in the OSCE region.” A wide range of topics are tackled within the different committees. The General Committee on Political Affairs and Security discusses cybersecurity, Turkey, terrorism, women in peacebuilding, the crisis in and around Ukraine, and terrorism. Also taken into account is the rise of ethnic tensions, nationalism and foreign interference in the Western Balkans. The General Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment focuses on climate change, sustainable development and the need to adopt a coherent response to migration. Other issues addressed are energy security, psychoactive substances, and the scarcity of drinking water. The General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions shows concerns for protracted conflicts, rising populism, religious fundamentalism, the vulnerable situation of migrants, especially women and children, their fundamental rights, and gender discrimination. At the end of the sessions, the Minsk Declaration is adopted, including recommendations in the field of political affairs, security, economics, environment and human rights and some resolutions dealing with terrorism, conflict resolution, climate change, migration, human rights, the crisis in and around Ukraine, the death penalty, new voting technologies, energy and water security, religious discrimination, new psychoactive substances, preventing child sexual exploitation, promoting gender-inclusive conflict mediation, and more. Moreover, the Standing Committee decides to establish an Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism.

www.oscepa.org/documents/all-documents/annual-sessions/2017-minsk/declaration-25/3555-declaration-minsk-eng/file

2017 Autumn Meeting of the OSCE PA and the Mediterranean Forum

- 3-5 October, Andorra la Vella, Andorra: About 180 parliamentarians take part in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 16th Autumn Meeting, under the

theme “Security in the OSCE Area: New Challenges, New Tasks.” The three sessions are centred on the themes of cybersecurity, environmental security and climate change and the importance of education as a guarantee of stability. The Committee's topics of discussion include the issue of the Catalan referendum, the democratic regression, and attacks on the rule of law throughout the OSCE area. A series of additional PA activities are presented, with praise expressed for the work of the OSCE PA's Ad Hoc Committee on Migration and the newly established Ad Hoc Committee on Countering Terrorism.

- 2 October, Andorra la Vella, Andorra: The Mediterranean Forum meets under the theme “Promoting Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean.” The Andorran delegation expresses hope for more action-oriented dialogue. Minister Counsellor L. Fratini, 2017 Chairman of the MCG, discusses governmental efforts towards dialogue in the Mediterranean, noting that in 2017, the MCG has focused on trafficking in cultural properties, cybersecurity, energy, the role of women in security issues, and economic cooperation. He talks about the priorities of the incoming Italian OSCE Chairmanship (Ukrainian crisis, protracted conflicts, cybersecurity, transnational threats and civil society dialogue). P. Roque, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), talks about the impasse in Israeli-Palestinian relations, the war in Syria, the instability in Libya, as well as the migratory and refugee movements, and how the EU has not provided a coherent and effective response to the latter. Among the MPCs delegations, the one from Algeria expresses concerns about security issues in the region coming from the Middle East. There is willingness to share practices on counter-terrorism, but questions are raised on how to build long-lasting trust. The Morocco delegation stresses the importance of multilateral cooperation initiatives as well as North-South dialogue. The Palestinian Legislative Council's delegate stresses the importance of the rule of law and human rights, criticizing Israeli policies regarding detention and settlement in the West Bank. The open debate touches on security challenges, i.e. terrorism, radicali-

zation, mass-migratory movements, regional instability, protracted conflicts and humanitarian crises. Many propose giving additional relevance to counter-terrorism on the OSCE agenda, with more resources and cooperation on information exchange. The migration burden carried by Italy, Greece, Turkey and Jordan is praised, while the EU's lack of an effective common approach is cause for concern.

www.oscepa.org/meetings/autumn-meetings/2017-andorra

2017 OSCE Mediterranean Conference

- 24-25 October, Palermo, Italy: The 2017 OSCE Mediterranean Conference is organized by the Italian Chairmanship of the OSCE's Mediterranean Partnership. The title is “Large Movements of Migrants and Refugees in the Mediterranean: Challenges and Opportunities,” and is attended by more than 30 foreign ministers and deputy foreign ministers and more than 200 high level representatives of the MPCs, OSCE participating states, OSCE institutions, international organizations, civil society, academia and the media. The first session discusses the increased risk of smuggling and trafficking in human beings arising from large movements of refugees and migrants. Vulnerable groups such as children face greater exposure. The second session is devoted to the opportunities arising from migration and the role of integration policies for growth, sustainable development, peace and stability. Migration management requires a long-term approach to unlock its economic, social, and cultural potential. The third session delves into the core of successful integration as a common responsibility based on a two-fold approach, with a focus on combating all forms of intolerance, racism, xenophobia, and discrimination, also based on religious grounds. Both newcomers and the receiving communities need to engage in a process of knowledge, exchange and adaptation. The message that emerges from the conference is that the way forward requires turning migration governance challenges into mutually beneficial opportunities.

www.osce.org/event/2017-osce-mediterranean-conference

Med Seminar: Women, Peace and Security: A Gender Perspective on the Future of the MENA Region

- 23 October, Palermo, Italy: The Med Seminar is held on the side of the Mediterranean Conference. The major re-shaping in the region in recent years has led in some cases to new political structures that have brought women's rights to the core of the political agenda. The first session looks at the opportunities that arise from these processes, to promote women's needs and aspirations. The second session focuses on the adoption of the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The current state of the implementation of the resolution and the WPS agenda within the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation is discussed. www.esteri.it/mae/en/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/approfondimenti/2017/10/conferenza-mediterranea-dell-osce.html

2017 OSCE-Wide Counter-Terrorism Conference and Civil Society Day

- 23-24 May, Vienna, Austria: More than 500 experts from across the OSCE region gather for the annual OSCE conference on Terrorism. Violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism (VERLT) is a threat faced by both OSCE participating states and their partners. Participants discuss good practices from the OSCE region on rehabilitation and reintegration strategies, as well as prevention of radicalization to terrorism. The conference also addressed youth empowerment in preventing and countering VERLT.
- 25 May 2017, Vienna, Austria: after the Conference, the Prevention Project convenes representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs), OSCE executive structures, the UN and interested participating states during a civil society day. The purpose is to give CSOs and other local actors the opportunity to further consider the issues on the conference agenda, and to put forward a series of recommendations for consideration by the OSCE participating states for strengthening the role of civil society and of local communities in preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization leading to

terrorism (P/CVERLT) in the OSCE area. The participating CSOs come from across the OSCE area, with expertise on and experience in a range of P/CVERLT issues, e.g., youth empowerment, community-law enforcement dialogue, rehabilitation and reintegration (R/R), religious engagement, research, gender, good governance and democratization. In particular, emerging themes are the role of trust and cooperation among CSOs and between state/police actors, the availability of political and legal space, and the importance of replicating and upscaling successful projects. Another topic that emerges throughout the conference is the need to work with the families of violent extremist offenders, to do more research into radicalization and recruitment in prisons, and to foster the empowerment of civil society by tackling the reasons for non-collaboration. www.osce.org/event/osce-wide-counter-terrorism-conference-2017

Annual Ministerial Council – 24th OSCE Ministerial Council

- 7-8 December, Vienna, Austria: The 24th Ministerial Council, the central decision-making and governing body of the OSCE is the culmination of Austria's 2017 OSCE Chairmanship, which has placed particular emphasis on defusing conflicts, re-establishing trust and fighting radicalization and violent extremism. Civil society's recommendations to the OSCE executive structures and participating states are received by the Council. Such recommendations are adopted by more than 100 NGO representatives who met during the Parallel Civil Society Conference. One of the main issues discussed by the Council is the crisis of confidence in the OSCE area. Security, it is advocated, can be achieved only when confidence is shared. Concerns arise for developments that have deepened mistrust, increased tensions, and caused conflict and instability within and between the states. At the margins of the Council, OSCE Youth Focal Points, experts, youth participants and high-level diplomats are brought together to discuss implementation and mainstreaming of UNSCR 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace

and Security. Another side event is dedicated to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW). A number of decisions are adopted by the Council: preventing the trafficking of human beings, and combating all forms of child trafficking, including for sexual exploitation; intensifying cooperation on economic activities, promoting good governance, and further encouraging employment opportunities for women and young people; enhancing OSCE efforts to reduce the risk of conflict stemming from the use of information and communication technologies.

www.osce.org/oscemc17

Mediterranean Contact Group

- 12 June, Vienna, Austria: The MCG meets to discuss energy security as a precondition for economic growth and stability. The meeting is an opportunity to showcase contributions to energy security in the Mediterranean region by the private sector, governmental agencies and civil society. Important discussion themes are also the legal and investment framework and diversity in energy governance. www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/322696

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 multidisciplinary 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 2017

Finances

- 24 January, Paris, France: The first 5+5 Ministers of Finance meeting is held, as a privileged forum for reinforcing Euro-Mediterranean cooperation and regional Maghreb integration and optimizing existing resources. The aim is to foster complementarities and synergies between members and the relevant regional and international initiatives. A ministerial declaration is issued. Regarding financial transparency, ministers underline the importance of: i. the implementation of norms and international standards of transparency defined by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF); ii. The development of systems to combat money laundering and terrorism financing. They call for cooperation among FATF and similar regional international organizations, with the aim of reinforcing their work in identifying and fixing the flaws in the financial system. Regarding taxation, they encourage bilateral talks between tax authorities to ensure uniform applications of existing fiscal conventions. The Dialogue 5+5 Finances has a relevant role in fiscal transparency, facilitating the implementation of international norms about financial accounts information exchange and information on actual beneficiaries. In the customs area, cooperation should be strengthened giving priority to the coordinated management of the borders against major trafficking activities and terrorism, and

the training of customs officers. They recognize the importance of financial innovations in mobilizing private capital for green investments and encourage the share of knowledge, reinforcement of capacities, the analysis of risks and international cooperation.

<http://medthink5plus5.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/2017-Paris-Finances.pdf>

- 6 April, La Valletta, Malta: The 2nd 5+5 Finance Dialogue meeting takes place on the fringes of the Informal Meeting of EU Finance Ministers, during the Maltese Presidency of the EU. The discussions focus on the promotion of private investment in the region after the recent economic and political upheaval. The ministers discuss the best ways to create the right environment for the private sector to flourish, highlighting the importance of political stability, good governance, legal security, infrastructure and market and finance access.

https://mfin.gov.mt/en/Press_Releases/Documents/PR170884/PR170884a.PDF

Culture

- 10 February, Tunis, Tunisia: the first 5+5 Dialogue Culture Ministers meeting is dedicated to "Culture in the service of bringing people closer and development." It results in the proclamation of the Tunis Declaration. The document highlights the importance of strengthening synergies between all organizations and associations devoted to culture in the Mediterranean Basin. These countries have considerable cultural assets, including heritage that should be enhanced as part of a joint strategy in order to promote a closer liaison and cohesive development between countries of the Mediterranean Basin. Cooperation in the cultural domain and intercultural dialogue form an essential vector for revealing the current challenges. Ministers agree that special attention should be paid to: a. the promotion of universal values, tolerance, solidarity, peace and freedom of expression to contribute to countering radicalization and extremism; b. strengthening cultural cooperation at the legal and institutional level to en-

hance the region's intangible and tangible heritage; c. promoting backup, digitalization and vocational training; d. countering the illegal traffic of cultural properties; e. encouraging mobility of cultural players between countries of the western basin; f. supporting policies and programmes for translating literary, audio-visual and cinematographic works; g. holding events and joint cultural prizes in the west Mediterranean; h. encouraging the creation of a Mediterranean digital library; i. developing joint cultural tours and museum networks; j. supporting the artistic creativity of youth in the Mediterranean with projects like Young Mediterranean Voices; k. encouraging the involvement of local authorities in cultural co-operation between countries of the 5+5 Dialogue.

<http://medthink5plus5.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Declaration-de-Tunis-10-02-2017-version-finale.pdf>

Research, Innovation and Higher Education

- 30-31 March, Tunis, Tunisia: The 3rd ministerial conference on Research, Innovation and Higher Education is titled "Promotion of research, innovation and higher education for social stability and economic growth." Research and education can play a key role in facing current challenges, such as unemployment, economic underdevelopment, environmental degradation, shortage of natural resources, and severe scarcity of energy and water. Recalling the Work Programme and values stated during the 2nd ministerial conference encourages the continuation of ongoing initiatives, and recognizes the importance of youth training and occupational integration, which must become a priority in projects in the ENP and UfM frameworks. Furthermore, they praise mobility programmes of students and researchers, which make a valuable contribution to mutual understanding and combating radicalization, racism, xenophobia and religious intolerance. They adopt a Work Programme for 2017-2018.

http://medthink5plus5.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/D__claration-55-Version-Francaise-31-3-2017-1.pdf

Defence

- 12 December, Paris, France: the ministerial meeting is the occasion to take stock of the activities of the year under the French Presidency. The initiative has enabled 36 of the 38 planned initiatives to be carried out. The two remaining activities, planned in Libya, could not be carried out due to the security and political situation in the country. Italy is the next country to take up the Presidency. The 5+5 Defence initiative aims to foster practical activities of common interest, favour the exchange and sharing of knowledge, interoperability of armed forces and develop trust bonds and mutual understanding among participating countries. This forum is organized around four domains of cooperation: maritime surveillance, air security, armed forces contribution to civil protection, and education and research. The initiative is based on a pragmatic and non-institutional approach, freedom to participate, decisions by consensus and efficiency.

www.defense.gouv.fr/dgris/action-internationale/environnement-proche/initiative-5-5

4. Adriatic Ionian Initiative (All)

After the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, the fragmentation of the former Yugoslavia 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 is also reformed. For the first time in Dubrovnik (12-5-2016) a double hat “Adriatic and Ionian Council / EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting” is 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 is 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 Greek Chairmanship

With Greece’s Chairmanship of the All begins a new cycle of chairmanships on a rotational basis. Its main goal is to focus on organizing activities to be carried out by Round Tables, which were reformed in May 2015 so as to also serve the EUSAIR, in the fields of Blue Growth and Maritime Cooperation, Transport and Energy Connections, Environmental and Civil Protection, Sustainable Tourism and Culture, as well as Inter-University Cooperation. Inspired by the Brussels Declaration of Foreign Affairs Ministers and the Adriatic and Ionian Council of 13th May 2015, according to which the Round Tables were turned into an auxiliary tool at the disposal of EUSAIR Thematic Steering Groups, the Hellenic All Chairmanship will further build on the work carried out by the preceding All Chairmanships as well as on the accomplishments and the progress achieved so far by EUSAIR Thematic Steering Groups. Moreover, the Hellenic All Chairmanship will place particular emphasis on cooperation in the sector of tourism and will make every effort to work closely with civil society and coordinate its actions within the framework of All inter-parliamentary cooperation, also taking into consideration the need to respond to the ongoing refugee and migration crisis.

- 8 February, Brussels, Belgium: The second All Committee of Senior Officials under the Hellenic Chairmanship takes place right after the EUSAIR Governing Board (GB). Items discussed include: the achievements of the Presidency up to now and the planned activities, the implementation of the overhauled All Round Table (which are now an auxiliary tool of the EUSAIR Governance at the disposal of Adriatic and Ionian Stakeholders); the next Adriatic and Ionian Council/EUSAIR Ministers

of Foreign Affairs meeting and the All Parliamentary Dimension.

www.aii-ps.org/events/event/48-aii-committee-of-senior-officials-brussels-8-february-2017

- 21 March, Athens, Greece: the RT on Environmental and Civil Protection takes place to discuss the following issues: the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025, and the connected Education Strategy; training in Sustainable Growth; the implementation of the Maritime Spatial Planning; and the ADRIONet project, the network of marine and coastal protected areas in the Adriatic-Ionian Region. Moreover, concerning Civil Protection, the focus is on the Greek national forest fire risk, the Union Civil Protection mechanism for the refugee crisis, problems connected to forest fires and smoke impact, and the use of social media to raise public awareness concerning these issues.

www.aii-ps.org/news/241-aii-round-table-on-environmental-and-civil-protection-athens-21-march-2017

- 23-24 March, Porto, Portugal: All SG Amb. F. Pigliapoco attends the 11th Plenary Assembly of the Mediterranean. The conference focuses on the ongoing crises and security challenges in the region, terrorism and extremism, as well as on economic cooperation and trade, climate change, protection of civilians, the Mediterranean cultural heritage and the promotion of human rights.

www.aii-ps.org/news/238-aii-secretary-general-attends-the-pam-11th-plenary-session-in-porto

- 28 March, Athens, Greece: the RT on Sustainable Tourism and Culture takes place with the theme "Leveraging the cultural heritage of the Adriatic and Ionian Region for the promotion of sustainable tourism development." The RT focuses on the perspectives for the development of the tourism sector in the Adriatic-Ionian Sea Basin, with the sharing of best practices and projects, pertaining to cultural routes and cultural heritage as a generator for sustainable development. The second session is dedicated to enhancing connectivity through transport infrastructure development for sustainable tourism destinations (water ports, seaplanes). The meeting is attended by representatives

of civil society and the private sector as well as public authorities from Croatia, Greece, Serbia and Slovenia.

www.aii-ps.org/events/event/51-aii-round-table-on-sustainable-tourism-and-culture-athens-28-march-2017

- 6-7 April, Ioannina, Greece: The XV Conference of President/Speakers of All Parliaments tackles the following issues: "Blue growth in the Adriatic and Ionian Macro-region: needs and opportunities" and "The importance of the parliamentary dimension in the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative." The Final Statement of the Conference recalls the support the EUSAIR can give to a comprehensive European response to the migration issue and the role of the Blue Economy in fostering regional economic growth. The All Parliamentary Dimension was established in 2001 with the aim of encouraging mutual parliamentary cooperation concerning economy, maritime affairs, transport and communication, environment protection, science and culture, as well as to encourage the development of appropriate forms of transborder cooperation in matters of shared interest in the Adriatic and Ionian Region.

www.aii-ps.org/events/event/56-xv-conference-of-presidents-speakers-of-parliaments-of-the-adriatic-and-ionic-initiative

- 11-12 May, Ioannina, Greece: The 2nd EUSAIR Forum takes stock of the progress and achievements since the 1st Forum held in Dubrovnik in May 2016 and contributes to defining the way ahead. It is a great networking opportunity, where stakeholders (European Commission and institutions, ministers of foreign affairs and ministers responsible for EU funds, line ministers, national, regional and local administrations, the business sector, academia, civil society and the general public) gather to discuss concrete suggestions, views and ideas on how to better achieve EUSAIR Strategy objectives. The focus of the event is Blue Growth and its interrelations with the other EUSAIR pillars: environmental quality, sustainable tourism and connecting the region. On the occasion of the EUSAIR Forum, a joint ("double hat") meeting of the Adriatic Ionian Council/EUSAIR Ministerial is held. The ministerial meet-

ing gathers the representatives of the Governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia and a representative of the European Commission. The representatives adopt the Ioannina Declaration. Moreover, two-side events take place on the occasion of the Forum: the Business to Business (B2B) meeting and the Monitoring and Evaluation of the progress of EUSAIR.

Main Events during the Italian Chairmanship

Italy takes over the All Chairmanship, as well as the Chairmanship of EUSAIR, starting from June 2017. In its All chair capacity, Italy intends to further strengthen the All role as an essential instrument for fostering regional cooperation, by completing Round Tables, progressively aligning with EUSAIR Thematic Steering Groups and by strengthening policy dialogue and cooperation among All Member States, as well as between the All and other regional cooperation fora, such as the Central European Initiative. Increased emphasis is also envisaged on further strengthening dialogue with civil society through cooperation with the Adriatic-Ionian Fora (cities, chambers, and universities) as well as enhancing inter-parliamentary cooperation.

- 7-9 June, Pescara/Chieti, Italy: The 17th Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chamber of Commerce and the 18th Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Cities - the main EUSAIR stakeholder event - takes place. The title of the event is "Bridging to the Future," and the sessions include topics such as governance to relaunch the territories in a macro regional perspective, cultural heritage and tourism as a competitive factor, industry 4.0 and digitalization for SMEs. Thematic workgroups discuss the EUSAIR Pillars: Blue Growth, connecting the region, environmental quality and agriculture, sustainable tourism, women's entrepreneurship.

www.aii-ps.org/events/event/55-17th-forum-of-the-adriatic-and-ionic-chamber-of-commerce-and-18th-forum-of-the-adriatic-and-ionic-cities

- 25 October, Ancona, Italy: A meeting of the ombudsmen of the Adriatic and

lonian region is held for the first time with the intention of creating a stable network of cooperation with a focus on unaccompanied minors. The growing number of unaccompanied children coming to Europe with the continued migration and refugee flow has made it necessary to activate cooperation among national institutions in charge of protecting children's rights in the Adriatic and Ionian area. This has been considered a "concrete way" to respond to the call made by All Ministers in Dubrovnik and Ioannina to use EUSAIR's potential to try to alleviate the migration and refugee crisis severely hitting some countries of the Adriatic and Ionian Region. A draft Declaration of Intent is presented in order to build the new platform for cooperation, promote a children's rights culture in the region, share best practices, implement joint projects, and perform a comparative analysis of Adriatic and Ionian systems for the protection of unaccompanied children. www.aii-ps.org/news/268-first-meeting-of-ombudsmen-for-the-protection-of-unaccompanied-children-held-in-ancona

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 Combatting Terrorism, should be mentioned. The highest body of the League is the Council, composed of representatives of member states, generally Foreign Min-

isters. 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 Aboul 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

Main Events in 2017

- 23-29 March, Amman, Jordan: The 28th Arab League (AL) Council meets at the Summit level on 29 March, preceded by an Economic and Social Council's ministerial meeting (26th March) and foreign ministers' preparatory meeting (27th). Together with the Arab leaders other representatives also gather at the Dead Sea Summit: the UN SG, UN Special Envoy for Syria, Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, SG of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), EU HR for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Russian President's personal envoy, the US President's personal envoy and the French government's envoy. The Summit is the occasion to discuss the current challenges for the stability of the region and common efforts to address them. According to Jordan's King Abdullah II, Arab action should be institutionalized to overcome common challenges, and he regrets that the AL has no decision-making role in current crises in Syria, Libya, and Yemen. The Amman declaration focuses mainly on Syrian and Palestinian issues, and terrorism. Arab countries would continue to seek a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis and

to support the countries hosting Syrian refugees. Arab leaders agree on the need to reach a political solution to end the conflict and preserve the unity and territorial integrity of the country. They urge Turkey to withdraw its forces from Iraqi territories. The declaration also supports the restart of stalled peace talks between Israel and Palestine on a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders. The statement affirms that the location of the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem is unacceptable. Settlement activity has been on the rise since US President Trump took office in January. The declaration urges the enforcement of last year's UNSCR 2334. On Iraq, the declaration says the country's stability and territorial integrity are the basic cornerstones of Arab national security. Iraq's efforts in uprooting terrorism and its work in eradicating Daesh from its territory are praised. Conflicts in Libya and Yemen are also mentioned. The declaration voices the leaders' support for Yemen's legitimate government, welcoming the organization of an Arab-European summit for cooperation. The summit concludes with a message of peace, full support for Palestine and a call for pan-Arab solidarity in the face of challenges. UN SG Guterres highlights the plight of refugees and commends Jordan for hosting those fleeing conflicts, while bemoaning the fact that developed countries have closed their borders to the region's displaced. The high youth unemployment rates and women's empowerment issues are also mentioned in his speech. HRVP Mogherini's participation in the summit focuses on the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, on the situation in Syria and Iraq, on Libya and on Yemen. Peace in the Middle East requires everyone's constructive contribution, and only the two-state solution is a realistic possibilities for the Palestinian issue. Moreover, she underscores the European and Arab interest in preserving the unique status of Jerusalem. Regarding Syria, she says that the only solution to the war is political and calls for a relaunch of the Geneva talks under UN leadership. If the EU and the AL joined forces towards this goal, consistently, their leverage could be huge. www.arabsummit2017.jo/en/news/Arab-Summits-28th-ordinary-session-begins

▪ 12 September, Cairo, Egypt: The 148th Session of the Arab League Council at the level of foreign ministers, is held focusing on a draft agenda including 28 items and the report of the SG on the activities of the Secretariat, the Palestine issue, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the developments in Syria, Libya and Yemen, items on the support for peace and development in the Republic of the Sudan, support for the Federal Republic of Somalia and support for internally displaced persons in Arab countries and the displaced Iraqis. The tone of the meeting is lowered by the Gulf crisis, which began on 5 June when four Arab countries – Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain and Egypt – imposed a land, sea and air blockade on Qatar. The reason given was Qatar's support for Iran and its alleged support for terrorism. Kuwait and the United States have tried to mediate, unsuccessfully.

www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170913-qatar-neighbours-trade-barbs-at-arab-league-over-boycott/

▪ 24 October, Barcelona, Spain: the UfM SG and the League SG sign a Memorandum of Understanding between the two organizations, with the aim of strengthening mutual collaboration and promoting regional cooperation activities. The two organizations agree to regularly exchange relevant information, jointly promote regional cooperation initiatives, co-organize events, as well as plan study visits and the exchange of experiences among officials and experts in areas of common interest. This framework should contribute to development and security in the region, and open up opportunities for the many young people there.

<http://ufmsecretariat.org/ufm-partners-with-the-league-of-arab-states-to-promote-joint-regional-cooperation-initiatives/>

▪ 9-10 November, Athens, Greece: the 2nd EU-Arab World Summit "Towards a Solid Alliance" is organized in partnership with the EU Parliament and the LAS. The summit aims to insist on the need for future prospects of both the European and the Arab world. The EU Commission's Vice-President for Energy refers to the intertwined interests of the two sides, namely security, terrorism, irregular migration, climate change, economic

development and trade. The relationship with the southern Mediterranean and Arab countries has been dominated by trade in hydrocarbons; recently the dialogue with supplying countries has been reinvigorated, along with supply. Nonetheless, the commitments to the Paris Agreement stand; cooperation with the Arab region, therefore, is broadening to include clean energy technologies and policies. He mentions successful examples (the EU-Gulf Cooperation Council Energy Expert Group, the UfM Platforms on Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency and Regional Electricity Markets, and the EU Neighbourhood Policy). Investments in sustainable energy in the private sector need to be further encouraged. He concludes with an invitation to deepen cooperation.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2014-2019/sefcovic/announcements/speech-eu-arab-world-summit-athens_en

▪ 28 November, Brussels, Belgium: 6th Meeting of the EU Political and Security Committee and the LAS Permanent Representatives. Since the launch of the EU-LAS Strategic Dialogue in November 2015, it has been agreed to continue developing the Euro-Arab operational cooperation, particularly in the fields of conflict prevention, early warning and crisis management, humanitarian assistance, counter-terrorism, transnational organized crime, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The meeting includes a constructive discussion on the current regional obstacles facing the Arab and European regions, in particular, the Palestinian question, Syria, Libya, Yemen and Iraq, as well as counter-terrorism, irregular migration, refugees, displaced persons and Iran. www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/11/28/eu-league-of-arab-states-relations-joint-communiqué-of-the-eu-political-and-security-committee-and-the-league-of-arab-states-permanent-representatives/

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 Mediterranean, as well as Brexit and Euroscepticism 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

Main Meeting during 2017

▪ 28 January, Lisbon, Portugal: The 2nd Summit of the Southern EU Countries brings together the HoSG of the seven countries to find common ground on EU policies. The event reaffirms the confidence in the European project and the conviction that building a stronger and more cohesive Union is a priority that corresponds to the national interest of each country. The main message is that the EU can only overcome the challenges it faces with unity and cohesion. In the final declaration, the HoSG confirm their will to enhance cooperation and contribute to a strong and united EU, with a series of measures and priorities in the following areas: fostering investment, growth, employment and convergence in Europe; ensuring the internal and external security of Europe; and migration and reinforcing cooperation in the Mediterranean and with African Countries. On the first point, they call for more inclusion of youth in employment, the imple-

mentation of the Single Market Strategies, the finalization of the European Monetary Union, the completion of the European Central Bank's action with a fiscal policy, support for the extension of the European Fund for Strategic Investments, hope for a strengthening of the European Pillar of Social Rights towards a European social model and welfare state, and call for trade policy based on fair exchanges. Secondly, they remark that security remains a top priority on the European agenda, support the EU Global strategy, and commit to coordinate defence programmes and reinforce the European Defence Agency. They remain vigilant regarding the situation in the Mediterranean and Africa and support EU capacity development to conduct military and civilian missions, in cooperation with African partner countries. They underline the need to implement the EU's Internal Security Strategy and preserve the Schengen area. Prevention of radicalization is also among the priorities, through tackling social exclusion. Thirdly, they engage commonly with European partners to promote development and growth in the southern neighbourhood and contribute to its

stability and security, and support partners to fight against irregular immigration as well as address its root causes. They welcome the New Partnership Framework for Migration, La Valletta Action Plan and the new European Fund for Sustainable Development: the need to build partnerships with origin and transit countries must respect human rights and international law; responsibility and solidarity should also guide the review of the Common European Asylum System.

www.portugal.gov.pt/media/24687555/20170128-pm-ue-sul-ing.pdf

▪ 10 April, Madrid, Spain: the 3rd Summit of Southern EU Countries to reaffirm their commitment to working together for a strong and united European Union. Cooperation across the Mediterranean Basin and African countries needs to be further strengthened, especially in terms of a comprehensive approach to migration. Solidarity and shared responsibility should remain central to EU Migration Policy, especially in relation to the Common European Asylum System. From an economic point of view, efforts are needed in fighting unemployment and fostering the completion of the single market, above all in

energy and digital areas. Labour mobility should be enhanced, accompanied by further investments in education and vocational training. The completion of the Economic and Monetary Union mean it is now essential to have the Banking Union, European Deposit Insurance Bank and fiscal integration. Citizens' security remains the main priority, yet higher cooperation among Law Enforcement Authorities is crucial, both within the EU and with third states. They welcome the entry into force of new EU rules – the Directive on Terrorism, Firearms Directive and Schengen Borders Code. Measures to fight terrorism financing, smuggling of cultural property and site destruction and prevent radicalization are needed. They express the wish for the EU to become a real security and defence provider. Furthermore, they reaffirm the central role of the UfM, as an expression of co-ownership in the management of common regional agenda. Finally, they condemn the air strike with chemical weapons on 4 April in Idlib (Syria).

www.lamoncloa.gob.es/lang/en/presidente/news/Documents/Madrid%20Declaration%2010%20April%202017.pdf