

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. 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 comple-

mentary 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 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 2019

- 10-11 January, Brussels, Belgium: Algerian academics visit NATO headquarters where they are briefed on several topics including NATO's cooperation with Mediterranean Dialogue countries; the Science for Peace and Security (SPS) programme; energy security; and cooperation in the field of counter-terrorism. www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_162258.htm?selectedLocale=en
- 20-21 January, Tel Aviv, Israel: NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller pays an official visit to Israel, to discuss practical cooperation activities between NATO and Israel and to exchange views on current developments in the region. www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_162538.htm?selectedLocale=en
- 18-19 February, Brussels, Belgium: Young Egyptians visit NATO headquarters in the framework of the Mediterranean Dialogue's public diplomacy activities, where they are briefed on NATO's political agenda, operations and missions, Small Arms and Light Weapons, NATO-Russia/Ukraine Relations, cyber defence, counter-terrorism and hybrid threats to NATO-Egypt cooperation in the framework of NATO's Science for Peace and Security Programme (SPS). www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_164055.htm?selectedLocale=en

- 19-20 February, Brussels, Belgium: A group of Algerian parliamentarians from the council of the Nation and the people's National assembly visit NATO headquarters in the framework of the Mediterranean Dialogue's public diplomacy activities, where they are briefed on the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, current relations with Russia, the Science for Peace and Security Programme, energy security, counter-terrorism and cyber defence. www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_164029.htm
- 20 February, Brussels, Belgium: The Emirates Diplomatic Academy (EDA) meets with NATO civilian and military officials and discusses partnerships with Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) partners and Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) partners, NATO's approach to the South, and NATO's missions and operations. The students - future diplomats - are accompanied by the EDA Director General, Ambassador Bernardino Leon, the former United Nations Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya. www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_164030.htm?selectedLocale=en
- 05 March, New York, USA: Representatives of NATO and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) sign a Memorandum of Understanding on the implementation of the joint Project on "Enhancing Capabilities to prepare for and respond to a terrorist attack in Jordan featuring the use of Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) weapons." www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_164200.htm?selectedLocale=en
- 05-06 March, Brussels, Belgium: A group of Algerian journalists and editors visit NATO headquarters in the framework of the public diplomacy programme activities. The journalists are briefed on topics related to NATO's political agenda, NATO-Russia relations, cyber defence, NATO missions and counter-terrorism efforts to counter hybrid threats. The parties discuss NATO's approach to North Africa, current relations between Algeria and NATO and future prospects for increased levels of cooperation. www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_164273.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ 11 March, Brussels, Belgium: Young Kuwaiti diplomats visit NATO headquarters in the framework of NATO's public diplomacy activities within the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. The young diplomats are briefed on the different strands of NATO's cooperation with countries in the Mediterranean Dialogue and in the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, with a special focus on Kuwait and the ICI Regional Center.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_164430.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ 22 March, La Goulette, Tunisia: In the framework of NATO's SPS programme, Tunisian navy officers receive a two week training course at the La Goulette naval base. The aim of the training is to improve the readiness of the Tunisian officers at sea and to upgrade their maritime simulator with further simulation capabilities, such as anti-submarine warfare, electronic warfare and environmental conditions. In the long term, the objective of the Tunisian Navy is to be compatible with NATO standards, to take part in NATO's multinational exercises and to further strengthen the maritime security of Tunisia and its neighbouring countries.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_164841.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ 03-04 April, Brussels, Belgium: A group of Egyptian journalists visit NATO headquarters in the framework of its public diplomacy programme activities. The journalists are briefed on topics related to NATO's political agenda, NATO-Russia relations, cyber defence, counter-terrorism and NATO-Egypt cooperation in the framework of NATO's SPS Programme.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_165633.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ 6 May, Ankara, Turkey: NATO Secretary General (SG) Jens Stoltenberg marks the 25th anniversary of the Mediterranean Dialogue during the North Atlantic Council, where he stresses that NATO is dedicated to promoting security across the MENA region through its continued fight against terrorism. He also emphasizes NATO's solidarity with Turkey after losing several soldiers on its southern borders where the country is exposed to violence and turmoil from

the Middle East because of its borders with Syria and Iraq.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_165851.htm?selectedLocale=en
www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_165855.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ 16 May, Brussels, Belgium: Tunisian Foreign Minister, Khemais Jhinaoui meets with NATO's Secretary General in Brussels where they discuss the level of cooperation activities between the parties, especially in armed forces interoperability, defence education, the development of key capabilities such as countering improvised explosive devices and cyber defence and cooperation in areas of good governance and public diplomacy, counter terrorism and the development of women's roles in the Tunisian Armed Forces. The parties also share views on the current regional security related to developments in Libya.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_166093.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ 22 May, Brussels, Belgium: The 181st Military Committee meets for chiefs of defence sessions at NATO's headquarters to discuss NATO's Deterrence and Defence Posture and the Enablement of SACEUR's Area of Responsibility. One session is dedicated to the Mediterranean Dialogue.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_165944.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ 17-19 June, Brussels, Belgium: The Moroccan royal armed forces officers visit NATO headquarters for the first time in the framework of NATO's public diplomacy activities with Morocco. They are given an overview of NATO's strands of cooperation with countries in the Mediterranean Dialogue and in the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. The programme of the visit features briefings and discussion sessions on specific topics such as NATO's current political issues, the SPS and the alliance's efforts in counter-terrorism, cyber defence and arms control.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_166957.htm

▪ 03-04 September, Tel Aviv, Israel: NATO's Assistant Secretary General for Defence Investment, Camille Grand, meets Israeli officials to discuss the ongoing cooperation between NATO and Israel, and exchange views on the current situation in the Mediterranean re-

gion, especially regarding weapons proliferation and arms control, cyber defence, research and development.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_168575.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ 9 October, Rome, Italy: NATO SG Jens Stoltenberg, at the joint press point with the President of Italy's Council of Ministers Giuseppe Conte, praises Italy's role in NATO, in Europe and in preserving international security, especially as one of the top force-contributing nations in Afghanistan. He also mentions the country's contribution to NATO's training mission in Iraq and also in supporting Mediterranean partners like Jordan and Tunisia, but most importantly by hosting NATO's Joint Force Command in Naples. The NATO SG and Mr Conte discuss the response to the challenges posed by the refugee and migrant crisis, NATO's deployment in the Mediterranean to help alleviate the crisis in different ways and Syria, especially regarding Turkey's involvement in the crisis.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_169485.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ 11 October, Istanbul, Turkey: NATO SG Jens Stoltenberg, during his visit to Istanbul, praises Turkey's deep relations with NATO and its role in the Mediterranean region and expresses NATO's support through defensive missile systems to help Turkey protect its southern borders as well as NATO's increased naval presence. The parties discuss the fight against terrorism and the refugee crisis. The Turkish purchase of the Russian S400 missile system is questioned by the SG. Turkey is expected to operate with restraint especially against Daesh.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_169574.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ 15-16 October, Brussels, Belgium: A high-level delegation of Moroccan diplomats visits NATO headquarters where they are briefed on different strands of NATO cooperation with the countries in the Mediterranean Dialogue and specific areas of cooperation between Morocco and NATO, including strengthening the level of interoperability between them, defence education and arms control.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_169729.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ 07 November, Berlin, Germany: NATO SG Jens Stoltenberg gives a speech at the Korber Global Leaders Dialogue. He praises the efforts of NATO along with other partners such as the UN and the US in the fight against ISIS and terrorism in general and its commitment to maintain training missions in Iraq and Afghanistan and find a political solution to the crisis in Syria.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_170606.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ 25-27 November, Naples, Italy: the NATO Joint Intelligence and Security Division along with Joint Force Command Naples host Intelligence experts from Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania and Morocco at the 17th 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 understands that Transatlantic and Mediterranean security are inextricably linked and is determined to implement a 360-degree approach to security.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_171499.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ 16 December, Kuwait: NATO SG Jens Stoltenberg, in his speech at the ceremony to mark the 15th anniversary of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), praises the involvement of Gulf countries in the ICI and all the programmes derived from it, such as energy and maritime security, cyber defence, civil emergency planning, and non-proliferation and arms control. He also talks about future steps to enhance the initiative.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_171928.htm?selectedLocale=en

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.

2019 OSCE Mediterranean Conference

▪ 24-25 October, Tirana, Albania: The conference is held under the topic of "The 25th anniversary of the Mediterranean Contact Group: achievements, challenges and future opportunities for the Partnership." The OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia) will celebrate a 25th anniversary this year. During the 1994 Summit in Budapest, a new framework for co-operation was created, known today as the Contact Group with Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. Making tangible steps towards a more strategic, action-oriented approach to co-operation between the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation is the focus of the two-day conference.

www.osce.org/event/2019-osce-mediterranean-conference

2019 Annual Security Review Conference

▪ 25-27 June, Vienna, Austria: The OSCE Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC) is the organization's flagship event for enhancing security dialogue and reviewing security work undertaken by the OSCE and its participating states. A broad range of topics related to a wide spectrum of politico-military security in the OSCE

region are addressed: Effective multi-lateral approaches to early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, conflict resolution and post conflict rehabilitation: lessons learned and the way ahead; Conflict and crisis situations in the OSCE area: building security and confidence; Conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures: challenges and opportunities; and Transnational threats - current and future trends in the OSCE area and beyond.

www.osce.org/event/2019-annual-security-review-conference

Annual Ministerial Council – 26th OSCE Ministerial Council

- 5-6 December, Bratislava, Slovakia: The goal of the annual ministerial council is to review and assess the organization's activities and strengthen dialogue on security issues in the OSCE area. At the end of the meeting, the parties decide that Sweden will take over the chairmanship for 2021 and Poland for 2022. They also decide to rename the Contact Group with the Asian Partners for Co-operation and the Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation to the "OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group" and "OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group" respectively. The 27th ministerial council will be held in Tirana on 3 and 4 December 2020. The parties express their commitment to the full, faithful and effective implementation of the Code of Conduct. They also discuss the Negotiation Process on the Transnistrian Settlement in the "5+2" format. Finally, they issue a commemorative declaration on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the OSCE principles governing non-proliferation and 15th anniversary of the UN Security Council.

www.osce.org/event/mc_2019

OSCE Informal Ministerial Gathering

- 8-9 July, High Tatras, Slovakia: The topic for this informal ministerial meeting is "From past action to future prevention: the OSCE's niche in fostering stability in Europe and beyond." The meeting is held in light of the rapidly

changing security landscape in Europe and beyond, which makes the need for innovative co-operation greater than ever. The Slovak Chairmanship therefore sees the informal ministerial gathering as a way to spark genuine high-level political dialogue and generate ideas to guide the OSCE's work as a platform for co-operation in the months and years ahead. The Chairperson-in-Office, Slovakia's Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Miroslav Lajcak, will host and moderate the plenary discussion.

www.osce.org/event/informal-ministerial-gathering

18th Autumn Meeting of OSCE PA

- 4-6 October, Marrakech, Morocco: The Autumn Meeting includes a Mediterranean Forum, held under the theme "North-South Co-operation Models and Economic Connectivity of the Mediterranean Region in a Globalized World," and a parliamentary conference under the theme "Promoting Security across the Euro-Mediterranean Region: The Role of the OSCE and its Partners." The Standing Committee of heads of national delegations meet on 5 October. www.oscepa.org/meetings/autumn-meetings/previous-autumn-meeting

Mediterranean partners for Co-operation

- 25-26 October, Tirana, Albania: Making tangible steps towards a more strategic, action-oriented approach to co-operation between the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation is the focus of the two-day 2019 OSCE Mediterranean Conference, which concludes in Tirana. Some of the proposals discussed are: ensuring a higher level of political engagement; making the Partnership Fund more operational; ensuring greater flexibility to support practical co-operation projects; and further developing a sense of co-ownership and co-responsibility for the Partnership. Participants agree that the expectations of partner countries – Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia – will have to remain at the centre of discussions. www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/437126

- 25 October, Madrid, Spain: Members of the OSCE Mediterranean Points of Contact (PoC) Network on Border Security and Management complete a three-day intensive training course on 24 October 2019 on two gendered aspects of transnational threats: terrorism and trafficking in human beings. Organized by the Border Security and Management Unit of the OSCE's Transnational Threats Department in close co-operation with the Spanish National Police (*Policia Nacional*), the training course brings together 13 members of the PoC Network. The high-level participants represent the border and customs services of Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia.

www.osce.org/secretariat/436994

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 ex-

change 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 events in 2019

- 18 January, Valletta, Malta: the 15th Conference of Foreign Ministers of the 5+5 Dialogue takes place under the co-Presidency of the Hon. Carmelo Abela, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion of the Republic of Malta, and Mr. Abdelkader Messahel, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. The main theme of the meeting is "Working Together: A Sustainable future for the western Mediterranean." Ministers acknowledge that a significant concerted effort should be made to collectively address sustainable development objectives for the benefit of the region. In this context, countries face a number of challenges, including those related to migration, the impact of climate change and bio-diversity loss, the threat of terrorism, radicalization and organized crime but at the same time, a number of opportunities that could provide the necessary impetus to address the aspirations and expectations of the people in the region. https://medthink5plus5.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/55-Valletta-Declaration_ministerial.pdf
- 11 June, Rome, Italy: The IV Ministerial Conference "5+5 Dialogue on Research, Innovation and Higher Education" at the Italian Ministry for Education, Universities and Research (MIUR) between the Ministers of the Western Mediterranean Forum (Dialogue 5+5): Algeria, France, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia. The ministers sign the Rome declaration, which concludes the two-year Italian presidency of the Forum. Since 2017, the National Institute of Oceanography and Experimental Geophysics - OGS has hosted, at its headquarters in Trieste, the Secretariat of the Dialogue and has represented Italy in the activities of the working groups. The upcoming leader-

ship, for the next two years, passes to Mauritania.

<http://www.fiveplusfiveihr.org/post/rome-declaration-signed-june-10-2019>

- 01-02 July, Valletta, Malta: The 4th MedThink 5+5 Forum is held under the title "Fostering Innovative Alliances in the Western Mediterranean. A Basin of opportunities for a sustainable Future." The forum is co-organized by the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), in collaboration with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion of Malta and the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC). The issues discussed align with the engagements taken to ensure a sustainable and innovative Mediterranean, the parties confirm the central role of the 5+5 Dialogue in reinforcing cooperation between the two shores of the Mediterranean.

<https://medthink5plus5.org/2019/07/03/iv-med-think-55-forum-malte-1-2-juillet-2019/>

- 12 December, Rome, Italy: Libya asks to hold the presidency of the 15th 5+5 Defence Initiative Ministerial Meeting in Rome in order to provide appropriate security conditions for the event. Italian Defence Minister Mr Lorenzo Guerini, in his opening speech, confirms Italy's commitment to foster stabilization in Libya. The Defence Ministries of the "5+5" partner countries have achieved significant outcomes along all the Initiative's lines of action, i. e. the maritime, aeronautic, civil protection and education and training sectors. Growing interest toward the southern shore of the Mediterranean, moreover, can only give further momentum to those activities, whose importance must be, as far as possible, harmonized with the Initiative's growing and coordinated commitments.

www.difesa.it/EN/Primo_Piano/Pagine/defence_ministry_minister_guerini_closes_the_15th_edition_of_the_5_5_initiative.aspx

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 and the other Adriatic-Ionian Eastside coastal Countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia), albeit with different timeframes and conditions, are gradually approaching the EU within the Stabilisation 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 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 strength ties within All countries and those seeking to become members of the organization. It also places 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 at 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. En-

vironment; 4. Blue growth; 5. Research and innovation; 6. Connectivity in the field of transport; 7. Civil protection; 8. Inter-university cooperation; and 9. Regional youth cooperation in the fields of education, culture, youth policy and sports.

- 7 February, Tivat, Montenegro: The 1st “All Troika plus All Permanent Secretariat” meeting takes place with the participation of representatives of past, present and future All Chairmanships (Italy, Montenegro, Serbia) to discuss different topics: information regarding recent events under the Montenegrin Presidency; the calendar of the upcoming activities and organization of forthcoming events; the Adriatic and Ionian Council (Budva, 6-8 May); the preparation of the Budva Declaration; ad hoc areas of cooperation (youth, anti-corruption, migration); and strengthening cooperation with regional initiatives/organizations. The second Joint Conference of Civil Society Fora (Chambers of Commerce, Cities and Universities), which will be held in Budva on May 6-8, will, in this regard, be a great opportunity for the Municipality of Tivat to meet and discuss its official entry into the Forum.

www.aii-ps.org/news/297-aii-troika-plus-aii-permanent-secretariat-meeting-tivat-7-february-2019

- 20 February, Brussels, Belgium: 2nd All Committee of Senior Officials back-to-back with the first session of the 9th EUSAIR Governing Board takes place to discuss the achievements of the presidency until now and the planned activities until the end of the presidency in May. According to the Montenegrin chairmanship, the upcoming activities include: a Round Table on Transport and Energy Connections; a Round Table on Environmental Protection; a Round Table on Tourism and Culture, back-to-back with the meeting of EUSAIR TSG 4; a Round Table on Inter-University cooperation; the Regional Conference on prevention of corruption; the Ministerial Conference on Youth in cooperation with the OSCE Mission to Montenegro; the 16th Conference of the Speakers of Parliament in Budva on 18-19 of March; the Second Joint Conference of the Fora of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Com-

merce, Cities and Universities to be held in Budva on 6-8 May, organized by the Montenegro Chamber of Commerce; the III Committee of the All Senior Officials (Budva, 6-7 May); and the Adriatic and Ionian Council (Budva, 8 May). The Chairmanship together with All Secretary General Amb. Castellaneta also informs senior officials about the official request by the Republic of San Marino to join the All. The 9th Meeting of the EUSAIR Governing Board takes place in Brussels on 20-21 February 2019. This meeting is also a milestone because of the invitation extended to the Republic of North Macedonia, which was warmly welcomed by its neighbouring country Greece. Regarding the core of the EUSAIR GB, the discussion on a follow-up of the Catania Declaration and the upcoming 4th EUSAIR Forum needs to be highlighted.

www.aii-ps.org/news/298-ii-aii-committee-of-senior-officials-and-9th-eusair-governing-board-held-in-brussels-20-february-2019

- 18-19 March, Budva, Montenegro: The XVI Conference of Presidents of Parliament of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative deals with tourism and culture as a common denominator, and an advantageous and strategic commitment of the All states and parliamentary bodies as an important resource for strengthening cooperation in priority areas of the All states. The adoption of the Joint Statement marks the end of the 16th Conference of Presidents/Speakers of Parliament of the Adriatic & Ionian Initiative (All). In their Joint Statement, parliaments of participating countries determine that cooperation of national parliaments within the All is important for identifying regional projects, which should, among other things, support the Western Balkans’ integration in the EU. Parliaments provide support to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, which represents a useful instrument of cooperation between EU Member States and candidate countries and potential membership candidates. Participants in the Conference, as representatives of their parliaments, call for European institutions to strengthen their political and financial support to the implemen-

tation of strategic projects from the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region.

www.aii-ps.org/news/301-xvi-conference-of-presidents-of-parliaments-of-the-aii-budva-18-19-march-2019

- 27-29 March, Skopje, Macedonia: A joint official visit of the All Permanent Secretariat together with the Montenegrin Chairmanship to the new All participating country – the Republic of North Macedonia. The parties discuss their great satisfaction with the liveliness of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative, further demonstrated by its power to attract new participating countries; the close connection between All and EUSAIR; steps ahead for the inclusion of North Macedonia in EUSAIR; and the strong role of the All in enhancing regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations, which is instrumental for paving the way towards the European integration process for candidate and potential candidate countries.

www.aii-ps.org/news/302-aii-joint-official-visit-to-the-republic-of-north-macedonia

- 4-5 April, Budva, Montenegro: The Ministerial Conference on strengthening the regional and Adriatic-Ionian cross cooperation in the field of youth, gathers for the first time the policy representatives from All Participating Countries, with the aim of intensifying cooperation in the above-mentioned area, bringing together more than 50 representatives of the countries of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, international and regional organizations, domestic institutions and non-governmental organizations. The meeting is opened by the Ministry of Sport and Youth, Nikola Janovic, who underlines how the All promotes economic and social growth in the region, as well as European integration of the Western Balkans. Ambassador Maryse Daviet, Head of the OSCE Mission in Montenegro further emphasizes that the OSCE recognizes the importance of working with young people and the very important role they play in building a peaceful and secure environment. Minister Janovic concludes that this event has been an opportunity to discuss key challenges and achieved results, as well as to exchange experiences among the countries of the

region regarding the improvement of the position of young people.

www.aii-ps.org/news/305-aii-ministerial-conference-on-strengthening-the-regional-and-adriatic-ionian-cross-cooperation-in-the-field-of-youth-4-5-april-budva

- 4 April, Podgorica, Montenegro: The All Round Table on Tourism and Culture holds two panels. In this first one “Interdependence of Tourism and Culture in the Adriatic-Ionian Region,” among other topics, participants discuss the Cultural Tourism Development Programme, the impact of digital technologies, as well as storytelling models in the interpretation of heritage along cultural and tourist routes. In the second panel “Cultural tourism in relation to UNESCO World Heritage Site,” a case study “Stecci - medieval tombstones” is presented. This is a case of regional cooperation among four countries, Montenegro, Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which, together, classified sculpted, medieval tombstones on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

www.aii-ps.org/news/304-aii-round-table-on-tourism-and-culture-podgorica-4-april-2019

- 24 April, Podgorica, Montenegro: The Round table on the importance of regional and sub-regional cooperation for the protection of the marine environment and effective implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and the directive establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning (MSP) aims to share knowledge, experiences and best practices in the field of the marine environment and marine spatial planning, emphasizing the importance of subregional and regional cooperation for the effective implementation of European legislation in this field. It discusses topics related to interlinkages between Mediterranean, regional initiatives and the European Agenda in the field of marine environment protection, national experiences of the integrated coastal zone management, the importance of protected marine areas for the sustainable coastal zone management as well as of the data on these marine areas for MSP.

www.aii-ps.org/news/307-round-table-on-environmental-protection-podgorica-april-24

- 24 April, Budva, Montenegro: The Round Table on Transport focuses on the connectivity of ports and monitoring of maritime traffic, including the development of the traffic network between ports in the Adriatic-Ionian region, as well as on the improvement of port infrastructures and services. The Round Table is an opportunity to exchange experiences and best practices regarding the Vessel Traffic Monitoring and Information System (VTMIS), Port State Control, pollution prevention and emergency response, cruise and nautical tourism development, port management and freight forwarding, and port services, as well as for disseminating European projects connected to these topics. Filippo Alabardi from the All Permanent Secretariat stresses that the Adriatic Ionian region has a great potential to further develop port connections and maritime traffic, thus benefiting a wide range of stakeholders in the area.

www.aii-ps.org/news/308-round-table-on-transport-april-24-budva

- 7-8 May, Budva, Montenegro: The joint 4th Forum of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and 2nd Fora of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce, Cities and Universities takes place under the slogan “Integration for the people, development for the region.” The traditional annual event aims to raise visibility of EUSAIR and reflect on the progress made since the 3rd Forum held in Catania in May 2018. This year’s Forum focuses on topics related to the field of Tourism and Blue Growth. The participants also have the chance to discuss funding mechanisms for EUSAIR’s four thematic pillars – Blue Growth, Connecting the Region, Environmental Quality and Sustainable Tourism - and share concrete ideas on the future prospects of the Strategy.

www.aii-ps.org/news/299-4th-eusair-annual-forum-budva-7-8-may-2019-save-the-date

- 8 May, Budva, Montenegro: The meeting of the Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative and European Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR) adopts the Budva Declaration and reaffirms the readiness of participating countries to

further intensify cooperation in the framework of regional initiatives, while strengthening the European perspective of the region. Additionally, the member countries agree to the enlargement of the All to the Republic of San Marino, which now becomes the tenth participating country of the Initiative. Furthermore, after the closing of the Adriatic and Ionian Council / EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting, a Memorandum of Understanding between the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative Permanent Secretariat and the Central European Initiative (CEI) Executive Secretariat is signed by the two Secretary Generals. The signing seals a strong long-standing partnership and contributes to fostering regional cooperation and sustainable development. The ministerial panel, on the topic "Integration for the people, development for the region," is also held on the same day in Budva at the end of the Ministerial meeting. All panellists agree that the Adriatic Ionian macro-regional policy is one of the most successful EU policies in this realm, underlining the fact that activities in the framework of All/EUSAIR contribute to the socio-economic development of the Adriatic-Ionian region, as well as to determining better solutions for the economies of all countries.

www.aii-ps.org/news/312-adriatic-and-ionian-council-eusair-ministerial-meeting-may-8-budva

Main Events during the Serbian Chairmanship

The Republic of Serbia formally assumes the year-long presidency of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (All) and the chairmanship of the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) from Montenegro on 1 June 2019. In order to ensure full coordination within the country for the duration of the presidency, as well as to provide a continuous exchange of views and assure cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, the government of the Republic of Serbia renews the Working Group for the Cooperation with the European Union in the Adriatic and Ionian Region (established in 2014) which comprises 22 members from different line ministries of the Serbian government. The Republic of Serbia will con-

tinue its activities aimed at developing regional cooperation and, in particular, at strengthening All as a regional structure, relying, certainly, on the already agreed and commenced activities. It is, therefore, necessary to focus future joint activities on several key priorities, such as: infrastructure connectivity, promotion of cooperation in the areas of culture and creative industries, sustainable tourism and youth exchange (like, for example, the establishment of the All Youth Chamber Orchestra, etc.). For the purpose of implementing the above-mentioned priorities, the inclusion of economic and financial segments in the presidency/chairmanship priorities are deemed a practical necessity, and sustained efforts will be invested to implement them in practice. In that context, special focus will be placed on the cooperation between chambers of commerce and industry aimed, primarily, at improving economic connectivity, increasing employment and reducing labour emigration.

www.aii-ps.org/chairmanship/programme-and-priorities-serbian-chairmanship-2019-2020/download

- 11-12 June, Trieste, Italy: The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the CEI Member States hold their annual meeting in Trieste (Italy) on 11-12 June 2019 under the Italian CEI presidency. The gathering is titled the "Central European Initiative at thirty and towards the future: common vision, shared values, European standards, strong regional cooperation." Security, the fight against corruption, sustainable development, stronger infrastructure and energy sector connections are the topics discussed during the meeting. The meeting witnesses the adoption of the Trieste Declaration, including specific areas for further cooperation. In particular, two salient initiatives upon which to follow up are agreed upon, i.e. a possible establishment of a CEI Local Dimension; and development of a "CEI Agenda for the Youth." Furthermore, the Trieste Declaration welcomes the recent signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the CEI and the All.

www.aii-ps.org/news/315-aii-secretary-general-attending-cei-ministers-of-foreign-affairs-meeting-in-trieste-11-12-june-2019

- 29-31 August, Ancona, Italy: The Adriatic Mediterranean Festival 2019 takes place through three meetings to learn - and better understand - the Adriatic-Ionian Macroregion, to offer ideas and food for thought on that area that lies between Italy and the Balkans. The meetings go under the title "Dialogues between the two shores," and are organized in collaboration with the Permanent Secretariat of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative. The cultural festival in Ancona brings together a number of musicians, writers and artists from all over the Adriatic-Ionian Region and the Mediterranean. The 2019 Adriatic Mediterranean Prize, an award given every year to figures who commit themselves to culture and rights in the Mediterranean and the Balkans, is attributed to the Italian musician and composer Enzo Avitabile. The award aims to be a recognition of the value of culture and art as an element of peace, knowledge and dialogue between cultures with a particular focus on social issues.

www.aii-ps.org/news/317-adriatic-mediterranean-festival-2019-award-ceremony

- 27-29 September, Ancona, Italy: The Adriatic IoNlan GaMes For Social Inclusion is a project co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union where more than 1,000 athletes (15-16 years old) from sixteen countries of the Adriatic and Ionian, Baltic and Danube Region compete in 10 different sporting disciplines. The main objective of A.NI.M.US is to strengthen the role played by sport in social inclusion and cohesion within the Adriatic Ionian Region thanks to the empowerment of cities and volunteer organizations. The network of cities and organizations involved will contribute to improving the collaboration, capacity building and spreading of best practices in inclusive sport and to strengthen social and cultural cohesion. Within the event, an InfoKiosk is organized to raise awareness on the relevance of EUSAIR –the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region- and the key role of its main stakeholders in fostering the sound implementation of its Action Plan.

www.aii-ps.org/news/319-a-ni-m-us-adriatic-ionian-games-for-social-inclusion-ancona-27-29-september

▪ 21 October, Belgrade, Serbia: The first All Committee of Senior Officials under the Serbian chairmanship takes place. The All Permanent Secretariat Programme of activities is presented together with the Priorities and indicative calendar of events of the Serbian chairmanship (for the period 1 June 2019 – 31 May 2020) emphasizing the important connection and integration with the “EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region,” focusing on the interconnectivity sector (between the coastal areas and the hinterland of the Macroregion and vice-versa), on the dialogue with civil society and on responses to labour migration. Particular focus is also reserved for several key priorities: infrastructure connectivity, the promotion of cooperation in the areas of culture and creative industries, sustainable tourism and youth exchange, as well as environmental protection, blue growth and cooperation in the fields of science and education.

www.aii-ps.org/news/320-aii-committee-of-senior-officials-belgrade-21-october-2019

▪ 20-21 November, Belgrade, Serbia: Three All round tables take place simultaneously between 20 and 21 of November in Belgrade. The first is the “All Round Table on Inter-University Cooperation” in the Adriatic and Ionian Region and takes place in order to discuss the situation of inter-university cooperation in the Adriatic-Ionian Region and Uniadriatic cooperation proposals and the programmes and tools to support interuniversity cooperation in education, research and technology transfer. The second is the “All Round Table on Energy Inter-Connections in the Adriatic and Ionian Region,” where the main topic is electricity and natural gas inter-connections and markets through the Adriatic-Ionian countries. The focus is on new and proposed projects and regulatory measures for better regional integration. European Union priorities including the response to global climate change, increasing digitalization of energy systems, and commitment to low-carbon energy technologies, are discussed in the background. And the third, which takes place on 21 November, is the “All Round Table on Labour Force Emigration,” where the main

topic of discussion is economic migration in the Adriatic-Ionian Region.

www.aii-ps.org/news/322-aii-round-table-on-energy-inter-connections-in-the-adriatic-ionic-region-belgrade-20-november-2019

www.aii-ps.org/news/321-aii-round-table-on-inter-university-cooperation-belgrade-november-20

www.aii-ps.org/news/323-round-table-on-labour-force-emigration-belgrade-21-november-2019

▪ 17 December, Belgrade, Serbia: The All Roundtable on Environmental Protection on the topic “Development of joint management plans for cross-border habitats and ecosystems with particular reference to large carnivores” takes place with a scope fully aligned with the “EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region” and its Action Plan. It addresses the protection and preservation of terrestrial habitats and ecosystems through the development of joint management plans, in particular transnational habitats and landscape elements of central importance for large carnivores. The discussion places the focus on participating countries’ commitments and obligations under national legislation, the EU nature protection acquis and the corresponding multilateral environmental agreements.

www.aii-ps.org/news/325-aii-round-table-on-environmental-protection-belgrade-17-december

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 the LAS main achievements, the 1950 Joint Defence and Economic Cooperation Treaty; 1995 Draft Agree-

ment 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 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 AboulGheit 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 the 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 2019

▪ 9 January, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: The General Secretariat of the League of Arab States (Media and Communication Sector), in cooperation with the Saudi Ministry of Information, organizes a meeting of the 10th regular session of the Executive Office of the Council of Arab Information Ministers where the parties discuss the recommendations submitted to it from the meeting of the 92nd regular session of the Standing Committee for Arab Media on 13 different items, including the “Palestinian issue,” “the Arab Media Honor Charter,” “Arab Media Strategy” and “the participation of the Arab League” as a guest of honour in the 50th session of the Cairo International Book Fair 2019, and the Arab Media Map for Sustainable Development 2030.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=1887

▪ 14 January, Cairo, Egypt: Mr Ahmed AboulGheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States (LAS), receives Mr Filippo Grandi, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The parties exchange views between them based on the updated Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner in New York in September 2017, especially with regard to addressing the needs of refugees and Arabs, inside and outside the Arab region. Affifi adds that efforts are to be made by LAS in the field of coordinating Arab action in the framework of dealing with the new global convention for refugees, with reference to the 4th Arab Development: Economic and Social Summit, which will be held on the 20th of this month in Beirut, as well as how to work to support UNRWA in dealing with the stressful living conditions facing Palestinian refugees.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=1897

▪ 17 January, Beirut, Lebanon: Within the framework of the meetings that Mr Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the LAS, is conducting, on the sidelines of the 4th Arab Development Summit: Economic and Social Summit, which is being hosted by the Lebanese capital Beirut from 17 to 20 January 2019, the Secretary-General meets on the 17th of this month with Dr Muhammad Ali Al-Hakim, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq. The parties discuss the urgent priorities of the Arab region and Arab citizens during the current period, with an emphasis on the importance of leaving the summit with results, programmes and joint plans and practical work that would represent an impetus for joint Arab action in development fields during the next period. Al-Hakim indicates that the Secretary-General is keen to confirm the Arab League's continued support for the Iraqi state in the efforts made to overcome the negative effects of the years of crisis that Iraq has suffered and the war against terrorism, and to achieve the aspirations of all the Iraqi people, while the Iraqi minister was keen to emphasize his role regarding the great importance that the Iraqi state attaches to supporting the work of the Arab League, to enhancing Iraq's in-

volvement in the activities and meetings of the League in various fields, and also to its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General in the field of revitalizing the League's work and in serving the joint Arab work.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=1904

▪ 23 January, Cairo, Egypt: The permanent delegates to the League of Arab States and the ambassadors of the Political and Security Committee of the Council of the European Union hold their 7th meeting where they discuss topics of common interest, with a special focus on the Palestinian issue and ways to advance the peace process, developments in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya, in addition to combating terrorism, issues of immigration, refugees and displaced persons, as well as Iran. Emphasis is also placed on the importance of working together to face the common political, economic, social and security challenges that threaten the stability of their common region. They also welcome the expansion of the Arab-European Partnership as an appropriate regional response. In this regard, the two sides welcome the holding of the 5th joint ministerial meeting on 4 February 2019 in Brussels and the first Arab-European summit on 24-25 February 2019, in the Arab Republic of Egypt.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=1914

▪ 27 January, Cairo, Egypt: Mr Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the LAS, receives Mr Geir Pedersen, the new Special Envoy of the Secretary General of the United Nations for Syria. The meeting witnesses an extensive exchange of views on the latest developments of the Syrian crisis and the LAS's role in dealing with it, as it relates first and foremost to an Arab state. They also stress the importance of reaching a peaceful solution to the crisis that meets the aspirations of all the Syrian people, preserves Syria's territorial integrity, and ensures an integrated deal with the human tragedy suffered by millions of Syrians for nearly eight years. The spokesman states that Aboul Gheit is keen to also stress the importance of working to stop international and regional interventions that have negative

consequences and repercussions, bearing in mind that these interventions played a major role in prolonging the crisis, and makes reference to the need to continue to work towards eradicating the threat of terrorism in Syria at its roots, thereby ensuring its complete elimination.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=1917

▪ 4 February, Brussels, Belgium: Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, delivers a speech at the beginning of the 5th Arab / European Ministerial Meeting in which he refers to the importance of working to strengthen cooperation and strategic dialogue between the Arab and European sides, and emphasizes that the Palestinian issue remains at the top of the list of unresolved international conflicts, expressing his regret regarding the unilateral measures taken by a few countries to move their embassy to occupied East Jerusalem, and calling on European countries to recognize the State of Palestine on the basis of the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. He expresses an appreciation of the European role in the field of humanitarian and economic support for the Palestinian people through UNRWA.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=1930

▪ 17 February, Munich, Germany: Mr Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary General of the LAS, in his intervention at the Munich Security Conference, affirms that the League rejects any foreign presence on Syrian territory in principle, indicating that the best solution to the situation in northern Syria after the American withdrawal may be a return to the "Adana" agreement that was reached between Turkey and Syria in 1998, especially since the agreement helps respond to Turkish security concerns without compromising Syria's regional integration.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=1944

▪ 24 February, Cairo, Egypt: The 6th meeting of the joint committee of experts and representatives of the ministries of justice and interior of the Arab countries is held to study the "Arab Agreement on the Status of Refugees

in the Arab countries.” The formation of this committee falls within the context of the efforts of the Arab League to activate and modernize the Arab Convention for the Regulation of Refugee Status, given the utmost importance, at the present time, of addressing the phenomenon of the flow of refugees between Arab countries, and the fact that it constitutes an important step towards remedying the dangers and challenges of the mass exodus of millions of children that some Arab countries are experiencing.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=1951

- 26 February, Cairo, Egypt: The Department of Health and Humanitarian Aid (the Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Health Ministers) organizes the 51st regular session of the Council of Arab Health Ministers and its Executive Office. The main topics addressed in this session are: the successful and pioneering experiences of the Arab member states in the health field; the proposal to celebrate Arab Health Day and the Arab Doctor Award, unify health legislation in Arab countries and the Arab Authority for Blood Transfusion Services; the annual Arab Ministerial Forum in the field of organ, tissue and human cell transplantation and donation; the unified speech of the Council of Arab Health Ministers in Geneva / May 2019; the Arab Center for the Authoring and Translating of Health Sciences; the project to establish the Arab Center for Cooperation and Research on HIV / AIDS submitted by the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria; the project to establish the Arab Center for Medical and Laboratory Research submitted by the Arab Republic of Egypt; improving the health of mothers, children and adolescents in the Arab region; the memorandum of understanding signed between the General Secretariat of the LAS and US’s regional office concerning drugs and crime for the MENA region; support for member states hosting council meetings, committees, activities and specialized training courses in health fields; and the Arab Fund for Health Development.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=1957

- 3 March: The Joint meeting of the Arab Council of Justice and Interior Ministers is held where they discuss, among other topics, activating Arab security and judicial agreements, activating the strategies and agreements and decisions related to combating terrorism issued by the joint Arab action institutions. In addition, each of the following agreements are signed: the Arab Agreement for Preventing and Combating Human Cloning; the Arab Agreement for Regulating the Transfer and Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues and Preventing and Combating Their Trafficking; the Arab Protocol for Combating Human Trafficking Crimes, Especially Women and Children; the Arab Protocol to Prevent and Combat Maritime Piracy and Armed Robbery.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=1967

- 6 March, Cairo, Egypt: The meeting of the Council of the League of Arab States in its 151st regular session at the ministerial level is held where it discusses many items on the agenda, most notably: the follow-up of the political developments of the Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict; the activation of the Arab peace initiative; Arab water security and Israel’s use of water in the occupied Arab territories; in addition to following up on developments in the situation in Syria, Libya and Yemen. The council also discusses support for internally displaced people in the Arab countries and strengthening the work of the Emergency Committee to protect women during armed conflicts in the Arab region, as well as international terrorism and ways to combat it and uphold Arab national security.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=1972

- 9 March, Cairo, Egypt: The 8th session of the Arab Media Youth Forum is organized by LAS (Media and Communication Sector / Media Department). This forum aims to involve young people in strengthening the social role of the media and to provide them with the opportunity to benefit from job and training opportunities in Arab media institutions, given that youth are the backbone of Arab society and must therefore be given the necessary atten-

tion, so that they can become an element for development and progress in their society.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=1975

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 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

Main Meetings in 2019

- 29 January, Nicosia, Cyprus: the declaration issued after the 5th Summit of the Southern EU Countries tackles several issues including: the regrettable withdrawal of the UK from the EU; the economic challenges within the EU and how to manage them through social rights, the EU Gender Equality Strategy, digital transformation and artificial intelligence; Security issues in some EU countries such as Cyprus; the new

Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) proposed by the European commission; Climate change; Energy security; EU-Turkey relations; Migration and the need for the effective reform of the common European Asylum System; Terrorism; the EU Global Strategy and enhancement of its strategic autonomy and ability to act; and Regional and Global challenges with a special focus on the Mediterranean.

<https://southeusummit.com/about/nicosia-declaration/>

- 29 May, Valletta, Malta: the declaration issued after the 6th Summit of the Southern EU Countries tackles several issues including: the dedication to fulfil the 10 commitments agreed on in the Sibiu informal summit of 9 May 2019; the eurozone; Climate change in the Mediterranean Basin; Security in the Mediterranean region; the Libyan crisis; EU-Africa Alliance; Challenges of European industry; Migration in the Southern Mediterranean states; the Syrian crisis, especially Syrian Refugees; En-

ergy efficiency and natural resource exploitation in line with EU and international law; the Association Agreement with Turkey; EU islands; the implementation of the Civil Protection Mechanism (RescEU); Technology and innovation in the Southern Mediterranean; sectoral cooperation in areas of mutual strategic interest not only among EU Member States but also with the rest of the Mediterranean region.

<https://southeusummit.com/about/valletta-declaration/>