

Other Cooperation Initiatives in the Mediterranean

NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative

In the mid-1990s, after the end of the Cold War, NATO started to rethink its role and mission within a new framework and realised that the best way to prevent possible threats to its members was to extend security and stability outside its borders. To this end, NATO launched an initial initiative for Central and Eastern European countries called the Partnership for Peace (PfP). It subsequently launched a second initiative, the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD), targeting the southern shore of the Mediterranean. Originally conceived of as a forum for dialogue, the MD later evolved into something more like the PfP. In June 2004, the Alliance re-booted its cooperation with Arab countries by launching the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), aimed at Gulf countries, and by upgrading the MD to a "genuine Partnership." The MD started in late 1994 with five countries: Morocco, Mauritania, Tunisia, Egypt and Israel. They were joined by Jordan in 1995, and Algeria in 2000.

Its aims are to contribute to stability and security in the region, to prevent misunderstanding between NATO and its Mediterranean partners and to promote relations between the participating countries. It is based on the principles of self-differentiation and non-discrimination, mutual benefit, and complementarity with other international security organisations. At the 1997 Madrid Summit, the scope of the MD was expanded beyond a mere forum for political consultation to include a more practical dimension whereby Mediterranean countries could also take part in a number of activities (training, seminars, and conferences at which NATO shared its expertise). At the same summit, the

Mediterranean Cooperation Group was established as the Dialogue's driving body under the authority and supervision of the Atlantic Council. The MD's Annual Work Programme encompasses different areas of practical cooperation in civil and military affairs. The activities included in the programme are mostly military (85%) and comprise courses at the NATO Defence College, the opportunity to observe or participate in military exercises in order to achieve interoperability, and the chance to take part in NATO-led operations. Additional areas of cooperation include: public diplomacy, military education, defence policy and strategy, civil emergency planning, crisis management and weapons, among others.

As mentioned above, at the Alliance's 2004 Istanbul Summit, the NATO Heads of State and Government decided to expand the political dimension of the MD to include meetings of Foreign Ministers, Defence Ministers and Heads of State and Government. In addition, the number of areas addressed by the Annual Work Programme was increased, as were the number of activities in each area and the number of plenary meetings (NATO+7). Moreover, the practical dimension of the dialogue was improved through the provision of Individual Cooperation Programmes (ICPs), indicating the objectives of a country's cooperation with NATO in the short-to-medium term. The first countries to complete their individual programmes were Israel and Egypt; to date, all MD countries except Algeria have developed their own ICP with NATO. MD activities are self-financed, but the Alliance can consider providing financial assistance on a case-by-case basis. The upgrading of the Dialogue to a "genuine Partnership" entailed an opportunity for MD partners to participate

in selected military exercises, thereby improving interoperability, as well as to cooperate on combating terrorism, intelligence sharing and contributing to military operations (Morocco and Israel participated in Operation Active Endeavour and Morocco contributed forces to the stabilisation of Kosovo).

After a series of high-level consultations between the NATO Secretary General and the GCC countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates), the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) was launched at the NATO summit held in the eponymous Turkish city on June 2004. Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar joined the Initiative in the first months of 2005, and the UAE joined shortly after. The ICI focuses on practical collaboration in fields in which NATO can contribute its knowledge and expertise. It offers a menu of bilateral activities in several areas of cooperation, including: tailored advice on defence transformation, budgeting and planning; military-to-military cooperation to attain interoperability; participation in selected NATO PfP exercises and NATO-led operations on a case-by-case basis; and cooperation on fighting terrorism through intelligence sharing. Since the Initiative's launch, its political dimension has been enhanced (to include high-level meetings, the ICI Ambassadorial Conference and NATO+4 meetings) and its public diplomacy activities have been strengthened. ICI partners have also participated in NATO-led operations: in Afghanistan and, more recently, in Operation Unified Protector (OUP) in Libya, to which Qatar and the UAE contributed air assets.

In 2011, the ICI Group, composed of political advisors from 28 NATO Member Countries and responsible for pro-

posing a series of practical activities and ensuring their implementation, was replaced by the Political and Partnership Committee, which is responsible for all partnerships. It also engages ICI countries to develop individual work plans and supervises the implementation thereof.

The new Strategic Concept adopted at the Lisbon Summit in 2010 refers to both the MD and ICI countries. It underscores the great importance the Alliance attaches to its groups of partners and reaffirms its desire to deepen its cooperation with them, in addition to highlighting a series of new security threats: cyber attacks, terrorism, and energy security. The new partnership policy approved at the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in Berlin in April 2011 affords all NATO partners access to the same range and number of activities, meaning that MD and ICI partners will have access to activities previously reserved only for PfP partners.

Chronology of the Main Events: January 2011 – December 2011

- 2 February, Brussels (Belgium): NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen meets journalists from Morocco. Topics discussed include NATO's new partnership policy; its transformation and outreach to the Mediterranean region and the Middle East; its military cooperation under the MD; its partnerships and the ICPs; intelligence sharing; and the fight against terrorism.
- 9 February, Tel Aviv (Israel): NATO SG Rasmussen meets Prime Minister Netanyahu and Foreign Affairs Minister Liberman and highlights Israel's valuable contribution to the MD from the start and the need to cooperate and strengthen political dialogue and practical cooperation in order to face common security concerns. The NATO SG also delivers a speech at the 11th Annual Herzliya Conference covering a wide range of security issues. In his speech, he underlines the importance of defining threats and challenges in order to find common solutions, especially in times of upheaval and uncertainty. It is also a chance to define NATO's role in the Middle East peace process: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a major impediment to regional stability and, although NATO is not involved in the peace pro-

cess, it could nevertheless act as a facilitator. The fact that Israeli and Arab partners gather around the same table in the MD is an achievement that should not be underestimated.

- 14-16 February, Doha (Qatar): NATO SG Rasmussen conducts his first bilateral visit to the ICI partner. He is received by the Emir and the Crown Prince and has consultations with government and military officials. In his discussions, the NATO SG underlines that NATO and its Gulf partners face common new threats and that, precisely to this end, the Allies are enhancing security policy consultations and offering greater practical cooperation.
- 15 February, Doha (Qatar): The NATO Deputy SG, Amb. Bisogniero, addresses the audience of the NATO-ICI Ambassadorial Conference, which gathers together representatives from the four ICI partners, as well as Oman and Saudi Arabia in their capacity as observers. The MENA and Gulf regions are currently experiencing a period of instability; however, they have also expressed a strong desire for real reform and democracy, which are the basis of long-term stability. NATO and its Gulf partners need to work more closely together to reinvigorate their partnership in the framework of the new Strategic Concept by ensuring greater opportunities for consultation on security issues and expanding the range of practical activities. The areas of potential enhanced cooperation are: energy security, maritime security and the proliferation of missile technology.
- 1-2 March, Athens (Greece): In a seminar organised by the Middle East Special Group (GSM) of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA), members of the GSM gather to discuss the situation in North Africa and the Middle East. The NATO PA is an inter-parliamentary organisation of legislators from NATO countries and 14 associate members, and its GSM provides a forum for parliamentarians from NATO and the MENA region to discuss political and security issues. In the year's first seminar, parliamentarians focus on the regional upheavals and their possible consequences, emphasising the support that the NATO PA should be prepared to give for democratic transforma-

tion in terms of increasing media freedom and creating stronger civil society institutions and viable election systems.

- 27 June, Brussels (Belgium): A group of experts from think tanks and research institutes from the Middle East, Europe and North America visit NATO headquarters and meet with NATO international and military staff to exchange views on current developments in the Middle East, the prospects for the region, the perception that its inhabitants have of NATO and the West, and the future role of NATO partnerships (MD and ICI).
- 4-5 July, La Maddalena (Italy): The NATO PA GSM's second seminar of the year focuses on the changing situation in the Middle East and North Africa through key speeches by senior officials from Italy, Egypt and Iraq and, on the initiative of the host country, Iran, which triggers several objections.
- 22 September, Brussels (Belgium): A group of young leaders from the MENA region visit NATO headquarters as part of the United Nation Alliance of Civilizations Fellowship Programme. Topics tackled include NATO's transformation and outreach in the region and its operation in Libya.
- 7 December, Brussels (Belgium): During the NATO Foreign Affairs Ministerial Meeting, the ministers discuss how to further engage the MENA countries following the Arab Spring. They welcome the events occurring in the region and underline the need to reinforce cooperation with interested countries. To this end, they state that they are ready to consider requests for partnership with NATO from countries in the region, including Libya, and to share NATO's unique expertise in defence and security-sector reform.

For further information:

Mediterranean Dialogue
www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_52927.htm
Istanbul Cooperation Initiative
www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_52956.htm
NATO PA Mediterranean Special Group
<http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=743>
NATO Defence College
www.ndc.nato.int/

2. Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation in the OSCE

Since the OSCE's 1975 Helsinki Final Act, security in Europe has been considered closely linked to security and stability in the Mediterranean region as a whole. Accordingly, over the last decades, the OSCE has strengthened and enhanced its relations with Mediterranean countries, namely: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. What was once simply a formal statement without any practical or political consequences has developed over the years and also been challenged by events in the region, as witnessed by the recent uprisings and political uncertainty affecting some Arab countries. In the early 1990s, Algeria, Israel, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia requested a closer relationship with the OSCE as "non-participating Mediterranean States." As a result, they were invited to Ministerial Council meetings, Security Review conferences and OSCE Troika meetings and had free access to OSCE documents. At the 1994 Budapest Summit, this relationship was finally institutionalised and an informal contact group was set up to facilitate the exchange of information on issues of mutual interest. Mediterranean countries were also invited to certain selected meetings of the Permanent Council devoted to Mediterranean issues. In 1995, these countries were finally upgraded to the real partnership status of Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation (MPCs). In 1998, Jordan also applied to become an MPC. The 2003 Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century advocated for deeper cooperation with MPCs due to the increasing importance of the threats originating in adjacent regions. This intensified cooperation could result in inviting partners to participate as observers in Permanent Council Meetings and to take part in information exchanges, as well as in encouraging them to voluntarily implement OSCE commitments. Identified fields of cooperation with partners also included: anti-terrorism activities, border issues, economic and environmental activities, anti-trafficking initiatives, human dimension meetings and election observation. In 2007, the cooperation was taken a step further with the establishment of the

Partnership Fund to finance activities especially targeted at the Mediterranean Partners. In 2009, the Greek Chairmanship of the OSCE appointed a representative for the Mediterranean. Finally, in 2010, the final declaration from the OSCE's Astana Summit underscored the need to increase interaction with MPCs and recognised that "security in the OSCE area is inextricably linked to that of the adjacent area."

The Mediterranean dimension of OSCE cooperation has increased over the years, although more on the political than practical level. The political framework of the OSCE's cooperation with Mediterranean Partners is broad and includes different kinds of participation in bodies and meetings. The Mediterranean Contact Group meets regularly and facilitates the exchange of information and ideas. It is normally chaired by the incoming chair of the OSCE. The OSCE Mediterranean Conference, which takes place yearly, provides a chance for high-level representatives to exchange views and perspectives on the partnership; it is also attended by international organisations, parliamentarians, academics and NGOs. In the OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting, partners participate as observers and can engage in high-level discussions with the OSCE Troika. Other yearly conferences and meetings in which the MPCs take part include: the Annual Security Review Conference, the Economic Forum, and the annual and winter sessions of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

In light of the events of the Arab Spring, the Organisation continues to express its willingness to support democratic transition by sharing its expertise and standards and offering all available tools to promote OSCE values and enhance prosperity, security and democratic institutions. In this framework, the OSCE PA has sent its first election observation mission to Tunisia. Furthermore, on the margins of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Vilnius, the OSCE Secretary General and UN Under Secretary General for political affairs co-organised a meeting to promote coordinated responses to the changes in the Southern Mediterranean in order to facilitate information-sharing and avoid duplication of assistance efforts. At the meeting,

representatives from the League of Arab States and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation met with their counterparts from the EU, NATO and the Council of Europe, as well as the OSCE and the UN.

Mediterranean Contact Group

In 2011, Ireland chaired the Mediterranean Contact Group, which meets five times a year to address possible ways for the OSCE to support a peaceful democratic transition in the Southern Mediterranean based on individual MPCs' requests and tailored to their specific needs. Representatives from OSCE MPCs (namely, Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan and Tunisia) brief experts from the OSCE and other international organisations on current events in their countries. These meetings provide an opportunity to address a wide range of issues in the three OSCE security dimensions: border security and management, energy and environmental security, and migration management and democratic reform. In 2012, Ireland handed over the chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group to the Ukraine in order to take on the OSCE Chairmanship

Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC)

29 June – 1 July, Vienna (Austria): This year, the ASRC, under the theme "Towards a Security Community: What Has to Be Done," offers an opportunity to review security work undertaken by OSCE Participating States (PSs). It is preceded by a special session to address interaction with Partners for Cooperation (Afghanistan and Mediterranean Partners in particular) and to explore the potential for enhanced engagement in tackling international threats and border and migration management.

20th Annual Session of the OSCE PA

6-10 July, Belgrade (Serbia): More than 200 parliamentarians from the Member States of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly adopt the Belgrade Declaration, which addresses cybersecurity, Internet freedom and human rights, among other issues. They also

call for reforms to make the OSCE more transparent and open to civil society.

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Fall Meetings - Mediterranean Forum

9 October, Dubrovnik (Croatia): The Croatian Parliament hosts the 10th Annual Fall Meeting, which includes the Mediterranean Forum, in which representatives from Algeria, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia join their colleagues from the 52 Participant States of the OSCE PA. Parliamentary delegations from Algeria and Morocco and diplomats from Israel and Tunisia brief attendees on their respective countries. Participants stress how important it is for governments to speak out on human rights issues, support the role of women in North African politics, and progress towards a two-state solution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

www.oscepa.org

OSCE Mediterranean Conference

10-11 October, Budva (Montenegro): Given current events in the region, this year's conference is devoted to "Democratic Transformation: Challenges and Opportunities in the Mediterranean Region." Participants share best practices and lessons learnt. Among the key topics are: the role of police and the army in democratic society; promotion of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law; and the strengthening of good governance. The conference confirms that the security of the OSCE area and that of the MPCs are "inextricably linked." The Lithuanian Chairmanship of the OSCE is also working on an action-oriented document to be presented at the Vilnius Ministerial Council to upgrade and strengthen dialogue and co-operation with Partners.

www.osce.org/ec/86972

Side Events at the Vilnius Ministerial Council

4-5 December, Vilnius (Lithuania): Two conferences and a side event are organised before the OSCE Ministerial Council. The OSCE-MPC Conference for Civil Society on "Transparency and Pluralism in Electoral Good Practice, Political Participation, Justice and Legal

Reform" and the side event on "Tolerance and Discrimination in Democratic Transition" offer a forum for more than 80 civil-society representatives from OSCE PSs and MPCs to exchange ideas, get in touch, network and draft recommendations for the Ministerial Council. They also provide a chance to raise NGOs' awareness of OSCE standards, institutions, tools and practices. For its part, the "Civil Society Parallel Conference" gathers together representatives from civil society throughout the OSCE area to review the status of human rights in the region and the challenges for media freedom and citizens' freedom to meet and organise. They also review the threats and challenges to the democratic process and the rule of law. A compilation of recommendations on these issues is presented to the Ministerial Council for consideration and distributed to all 56 OSCE Participating States.

OSCE Ministerial Council

6-7 December, Vilnius (Lithuania): The Foreign Ministers of the OSCE Participating States and Partners for Cooperation gather to address security challenges. A consensus is reached in addressing transnational threats, combating trafficking of human beings, promoting equal opportunities for men and women in the professional sphere, and enhancing engagement with Mediterranean Partners. In the Vilnius Declaration a decision on Partners for Cooperation (Asian and Mediterranean) underscores the participants' willingness to promote sustainable security and support democratic transition under the UN framework. In the Council's closing remarks, the partners also decide to raise the Partnership to a new level by facilitating greater interaction on a wide range of practical issues to help them manage their transitional processes and implement reforms.

www.osce.org/node/82462

3. The 5+5 Dialogue

The 5+5 Dialogue was set up on 10 October 1990 during a ministerial meeting in Rome of 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). 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. The Dialogue only deals with the Western Mediterranean and thus does not have to address the Israel-Palestine conflict, which, along with the homogeneity of the Dialogue participants, enables it to reach more agreements. Originally just a politic compromise between Foreign Ministers, it later expanded to include other spheres, such as education, the environment and renewable energies, as well as home affairs (since 1995), migrations (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 an ideal forum for the exchange of ideas and the launch of new initiatives. It can also capitalise 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 2011

- 21-23 February, Tunis (Tunisia): The 5+5 Education Ministers meet as planned at the last meeting, held in Biarritz in 2009. Participants take an interest in digital development in schools. The first edition of the Euromed Education exhibition takes place during the International Fair in Kram. As part of the "5+5 Education" initiative, this meeting is the first chance for information and communication technology (ICT) sector professionals and ministers to build new partnerships, increase their knowledge of the education sector and note the differences between the two shores in order to enable better relations with regard to education in the digital era.
- June, Valetta (Malta): The second 5+5 Summit of Heads of State and Gov-

ernment, originally scheduled to take place in Malta in 2011, is postponed to 20 February 2012 in Italy due to recent events in the Mediterranean region.

- 15-16 November, Nouakchott (Mauritania): The 5+5 Defence Initiative's 13th Steering Committee Meeting welcomes the return to the 5+5 Initiative of Libya, which had been absent for a few months because of the socio-political changes taking place in the country in 2011. Officials from the participating countries tackle a number of issues, such as terrorism, illegal immigration and air security, prepare the next Ministerial Meeting of the Defence Initiative, and take stock of this year's action plan, which includes a number of high-level military meetings in Member States, joint operational exercises and training courses, and research and strategic studies to enhance security, peace and stability in the Western Mediterranean.

- 10-11 December, Nouakchott (Mauritania): The Defence Ministers of the ten Mediterranean countries involved in the 5+5 Defence Initiative gather for their 7th Ministerial Meeting. It is the first meeting since the recent regime changes in Tunisia and Libya and the recent Islamist electoral victory in Morocco. They adopt the 2012 action plan and assess the implementation of the 2011 activities. Several training courses and joint exercises among countries from both shores of the Western Mediterranean were held for the first time this year.

The region faces considerable threats, such as terrorism, illegal immigration, and drugs and weapons trafficking, as well as the spread of weapons due to the turmoil in Libya. Indeed, they may already have fallen into the hands of terrorist networks. The Joint Ministerial Declaration entrusts the following Presidency of the Initiative to Morocco and underlines the priorities for next year, which include dealing with the sensitive issue of terrorism, hostage-taking and instability in the Sahel, the establishment of a non-permanent staff in case of crisis, and organised crime in general. Given the difficulties experienced in other fields of the 5+5 Dialogue due to the upheavals and changes affecting the North African Member Countries, it is worth noting that all 5+5 Defence Initiative Members participated in all meetings and activities in 2011.

4. Adriatic Ionian Initiative (All)

The Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (All) was established at the Summit on Development and Security in the Adriatic and Ionian Seas held in Ancona in 2000 as a response to the region's political and ideological fragmentation following the dismantling of the Berlin Wall. In the presence of the European Commission, the Foreign Ministers of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy and Slovenia signed the Ancona Declaration with the aim of strengthening regional cooperation to promote economic and political stability in the area and to support the prospects for EU integration of its non-EU Member Countries. In 2007, Serbia and Montenegro joined the Initiative. The region's geopolitical situation has changed since the organisation was founded: Slovenia joined the EU in 2004, Croatia will become an official member by 2013, and the other four countries – Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia – are advancing towards EU integration within the Stabilisation and Association Process framework, albeit each with its own timeframe and conditions.

The All's main focus is to find common solutions to common problems given the historical, social, cultural and geopolitical similarities among the region's countries. According to the Permanent Secretariat (PS), stronger social and trade relations between the Participating Countries will strengthen the region as a whole both politically and economically. The problems addressed include: environmental protection in the Adriatic and Ionian Seas; inter-university cooperation; culture; the preservation of art after natural disasters; the fight against crime; and maritime cooperation.

The Initiative's decision-making body is the Adriatic Ionian Council (comprised of the Foreign Ministers of the Participating Countries), and its agenda is prepared three times a year at the regular meetings of the Committee of Senior Officials (the executive body).

The Initiative's Chairmanship rotates alphabetically each year in May/June. The Montenegrin Chairmanship ended in May 2011 and Serbia took over until May 2012.

The All Permanent Secretariat (PS), founded in 2008 under the Greek Chairmanship, manages the Regional Cooperation Programme, which co-finances

cross-border projects operated through the Round Tables and supports All countries in the process of implementing the EU Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Macro-Region. The PS was launched to make the initiative more "project-oriented," as this technique has proven to be effective in the macro-region.

In this regard, the approval of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Macro-Region, the third macro-region in Europe, is an important step towards the region's development. Its tasks are to connect the areas of the macro-region to promote sustainable development and protect the coastal marine environment from pollution while following the EU's strategic guidelines for development, growth and stability and, in particular, the EU's 2020 Strategy. The latter will be implemented in 2014 during the Greek and Italian Presidencies of the European Union. The common goal of the cooperation between All Participating States, coastal regional authorities and the thematic networks is to make the basin an internal sea of the EU by the time the Western Balkan countries have been integrated. Due to the area's highly heterogeneous characteristics, the Adriatic and Ionian Seas will be affected by the free movement of persons, goods and services.

The Initiative also collaborates with other regional organisations in South-Eastern Europe, namely the Central European Initiative (CEI), the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC), the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), the Danube Cooperation Process (DCP) and different Adriatic and Ionian forums (Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce, UniAdriion and the Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities and Towns). This wide network of relationships is a key reference point for the development of EU policies at the local and regional level; it helps make the support for transnational partnerships strategic at a local level and contributes to the structuring of systems of dialogue and collaboration among local authorities, regions and central administrations.

All action is conducted through four Round Tables devoted to the following issues: small and medium-sized enterprises; transport and maritime cooperation; tourism, culture and inter-university cooperation; and the environment and protection against fire.

Main Events under the Montenegrin Chairmanship

During the Montenegrin Chairmanship, the main focus of the Round Tables has been close collaboration within the EU framework in order to facilitate EU accession.

- 8 April, Ancona (Italy): During the 1st International Forum on Fisheries of the Adriatic-Ionian Basin, held in collaboration with Adriatic and Ionian coastal states and the European Commission, participants agree to study new common cross-border projects, particularly in the area of subsidiary activities for fisheries.
- 11-13 April, Budva (Montenegro): The 9th Meeting of the Presidents of the Parliaments of All Member Countries on "The Area of the Mediterranean – The Cradle of the Mediterranean" and "Sustainable Development in the Energy Sector in the Adriatic-Ionian Region" is held. The participants officially undertake to mobilise their respective parliaments to intensify their efforts to achieve the EU integration of all Western Balkan All Participating Countries and to ask the European institutions to develop a macro-regional strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Basin.
- 12 April, Podgorica (Montenegro): The Round Table for Tourism, Culture and Inter-University Cooperation aims to promote faster, permanent development among the All countries by strengthening the tourism sector. The mandate of the meeting is to reach maximum potential through vocational education and maritime tourism development while recognising the importance of sustainability and environmental protection. The panel also addresses the issues of cooperation in tourism and expansion to distant markets.
- 22 May, Brussels (Belgium): 3rd Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials. The Montenegrin Chairmanship reminds participants about FYROM's interest in becoming a member of the All. A consensus is not reached due to the refusal of Greece, Albania and the All-PS Secretary General, which argue that the All is a maritime organisation and that there is thus no reason for a non-coastal state to join. The participants agree to take time to assess the FYROM's proposal and to work on a legal framework for accession. The Serbian Chairmanship indicates the following priority areas: transport and communication and inter-university cooperation.
- 23 May, Brussels (Belgium): At the 13th Meeting of the Adriatic and Ionian

Council, participants acknowledge the progress made in strengthening ties between the EU and All countries to facilitate their future entry in the EU and to facilitate collaboration on joint programmes. The participants also underscore the common desire of the Parliaments of the Participating States to collectively reach EU goals and the importance of intergovernmental cooperation in the Adriatic and Ionian Basin as a tool for promoting sustainable development in the region.

Main Events under the Serbian Chairmanship

The main objectives of the Serbian Chairmanship are to improve the promotion of the democratic values of the EU and to strengthen relations between All Member Countries. Special attention will be given to the fight against organised crime.

- 21 June, Belgrade (Serbia): Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative. One of the priorities of the Serbian Chairmanship is for the EU to establish the Adriatic Ionian Macro-Region. Support from EU Member Countries is crucial for this purpose. The participants also support the proposals to work on a protocol for the preservation of artwork after earthquakes or natural disasters and the drafting of guidelines for submission of common, cross-border projects subsidised by the funds provided by Italy. The All-PS will be a reference point for information on the approval of the Adriatic-Ionian as a macro-region and has access to funds (provided by Italy) to support the establishment of the macro-region. The participants agree that the All does not foresee new enlargements.
- 23 September, New York (USA): Informal meeting of Foreign Ministers of All, CEI and SEEC Member States. The aim is to strengthen cooperation among the CEI, the SEEC and the All, especially in terms of economic cooperation and the need to upgrade infrastructure and transport facilities in the region. The Ministers agree that a flexible, project-oriented approach is the most efficient for the region and call for the inclusion of private business in designing and implementing these projects.
- 3 October, Belgrade (Serbia): Round Table on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises. Participants state the need to

implement an International Court to settle disputes amongst enterprises free of charge; the main challenge is to convince enterprises to no longer resort to private institutions to fulfil this need. The representatives of each Member Country present the funding strategies for SMEs implemented in their country and argue that the main difficulties are expensive loans, lack of credit institutions that can compete with banks, and insufficient support from their respective governments. The participants approve the Western Balkan SMEs Platform as a form of financial support for innovative and fast-growing companies.

- 29-30 November, Belgrade (Serbia): At the Regional Conference of Interior and Justice Ministers, participants express their willingness to cooperate to collaboratively fight all forms of crime, create a regional expert team of central executive authorities formed at the initiative of the Minister of Justice of the interested country, and create a special type of police to implement the agreed international legal framework. Improved cooperation for international legal assistance is also announced.
- 13 December, Ancona (Italy): The Round Table on Maritime Cooperation brings together representatives of the Participating States and the Italian Coast Guard (ITCG) to collaborate on harmonising international maritime rules in all countries. The ITCG and the Slovenian Inspectorate for Agriculture, Forestry and Food collaborate on an inspection protocol for fishing activities, and the ITCG is also working on three projects for the protection of the environment in the Adriatic-Ionian region (Integrated Coastal Zone Management; Strategic Environmental Assessment of Maritime Activities Including Ballast Water Issue; Contingency Plan for the Adriatic). The participants support an informal partnership with the ITCG to work together on EU-funded projects on maritime training and capacity building. The goal of the ADRIATIC 11 project "Regional Cooperation & Coast Guard Development in the Adriatic Sea" is to promote cooperation and development among the coast guard and maritime authorities in all All coastal states. The Norwegian Coast Guard aids this goal by giving technical and educational support.

For further information:
www.aii-ps.org/