

## Chronologies

# Other Cooperation Initiatives in the Mediterranean

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

Instability in the Mediterranean region is important to NATO Allies and partners both for humanitarian and geopolitical reasons as security in the Middle East and North Africa is organically related to security in Europe. NATO has developed a network of partnership with seven southern Mediterranean countries under the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD), as well as with four countries of the Gulf region through the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). Within these frameworks, these countries: share insights on areas of common interest or concern through political consultation and intelligence sharing; participate in exercises and training for future missions; contribute to current operations; support research on new capability development; integrate gender perspective into security and defence; fight against corruption in the defence sector; enhance efforts to destroy or control arms. MD started in 1994 with five participating countries, which included Egypt, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, followed a few years later by Algeria and Jordan.

The Dialogue has the following features: it is progressive in terms of participation and content; it is generally bilateral in the NATO+1 format but also admits multilateral meetings in the NATO+7 format; the same basis is offered to all the partners according to a non-discrimination principle; however each country can decide to intensify its own participation in the spirit of self-differentiation through an Individual Cooperation Programme (ICP) and NATO will not impose the extent of the cooperation; it is complementary to other regional or in-

ternational 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 Counselors 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 28 Allies 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 Sci-

ence 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 PFP 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 Uni-

fied 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 2016*

- 18-19 February, Rabat, Morocco: NATO Deputy SG Vershbow pays his first official visit to Morocco. He underlines Morocco's contribution to international security and stability in a fast changing and turbulent regional security environment. In his bilateral meetings, Ambassador Vershbow stresses that the security of NATO member countries is closely linked to the security of its neighbours in the South, and thanks Morocco for facilitating the achievement of a political solution to the crisis in Libya. At a Public Diplomacy seminar on NATO-Morocco Cooperation in the 21st century, Ambassador Vershbow discusses NATO's continued commitment to working with Morocco in the MD framework. For over two decades, both through MD and ICP, NATO and Morocco have been able to build a strong partnership, adapting to Morocco's evolving security needs. Morocco has contributed in various ways to NATO missions in the Balkans – first in Bosnia-Herzegovina and then in Kosovo – and to Operation Unified Protector in Libya. Recently it also played a major role in seeking to promote a political solution to the Libyan crisis, hosting the UN-led consultations and actively trying to build a bridge between Libya's warring parties.

[www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_128274.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_128274.htm?selectedLocale=en)

- 29 February, Kuwait City, Kuwait: NATO SG Stoltenberg welcomes clos-

er cooperation between NATO and Kuwait during his first official visit, speaking at the site of the future NATO-Kuwait Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) Regional Centre. The NATO-ICI Centre will foster cooperation between NATO and Gulf partners in a number of areas, including strategic analysis, civil emergency planning, military-to-military cooperation and public diplomacy. It will be a focal point for NATO's cooperation with Kuwait and the other countries of the ICI, as well as others in the Gulf, such as Saudi Arabia and Oman, and with the Gulf Cooperation Council. Kuwait was the first country to join the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative in 2004. It was also the first country in the region to host meetings of Gulf countries and the North Atlantic Council and to sign an information security agreement with NATO in order to facilitate the exchange of sensitive information, and an Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme with NATO. During the visit, a NATO-Kuwait Transit Agreement is also signed. This agreement will facilitate the transit of personnel, supplies and equipment to the NATO Mission in Afghanistan.

[www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_128712.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_128712.htm)

- 2 March, Abu-Dhabi, United Arab Emirates: Official visit to UAE by NATO SG Stoltenberg, where he praises UAE's contributions to NATO-led missions in Bosnia, Libya and Afghanistan. UAE is one of NATO's most active partners in the framework of the ICI. In 2012, the UAE became the first and only country in the Middle East and North Africa region to open a mission to NATO. The UAE has held joint consultations and exercises with NATO in numerous areas, including maritime security, counter-piracy, proliferation and energy security.

- 17 March, NATO HQ, Brussels, Belgium: NATO SG Stoltenberg welcomes King Abdullah II for talks on the Alliance's partnership with Jordan and regional security challenges. Mr. Stoltenberg underscores NATO's commitment to Jordan and the country's role as an active member of NATO's MD. He also commends Jordan for its valuable contributions to the NATO Response Force and its participation in NATO-led mis-

sions in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Libya. In particular, SG thanks Jordan's contribution to the training of Iraqi officers in Jordan, as part of NATO's Defence Capacity Building assistance measures for Iraq. In their talks, they also discuss NATO-Jordan bilateral cooperation and shared security challenges, including the spread of terrorism and extremism. [www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_129388.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_129388.htm?selectedLocale=en)

- 18 March, NATO HQ, Brussels, Belgium: NATO SG Stoltenberg welcomes the Gulf Cooperation Council SG Al Zayani for talks on deepening cooperation between the two organizations. They exchange views on the regional security situation, and discuss reinforcing ties between NATO and the GCC with more regular staff contacts and political dialogue as a first step. The Alliance has already developed political dialogue and practical cooperation with four out of six Gulf Cooperation Council members (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates) through ICI.

[www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_129393.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_129393.htm?selectedLocale=en)

- 4 May, NATO HQ, Brussels, Belgium: NATO Agrees to allow Israel, Jordan, Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait to open diplomatic missions to its headquarters, meaning that ambassadors and attachés will have upgraded access to exercises, events and alliance-related procurement programs. In Israel's case, permission to open an office in NATO is made possible after Turkey lifts veto.

- 19-20 May, Brussels, Belgium: NATO Foreign Ministers meet to tackle key issues before the Warsaw Summit in July. They agree that NATO should do more to project stability beyond the Alliance's borders, both by deploying combat forces when needed and by training up local forces. Ongoing initiatives with partners include training for hundreds of Iraqi officers in Jordan, cyber defence projects with Jordan, and helping developing special forces training and a national intelligence centre for Tunisia. Ministers also decided to continue preparatory work with a view to assisting Libya strengthen its defence and security institutions, provided the Libyans so request. Cooperation with EU will increase and Operation Active Endeavour

in the Mediterranean will become a broader maritime security operation.

[www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/events\\_130777.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/events_130777.htm)

- 8-9 July, Warsaw, Poland: 58 official delegations participate in the 57th NATO summit, which is held in Poland for the first time. The two main themes of the Summit are deterrence, defence and projecting stability to the NATO neighbourhood. The continuing crises and instability across the Middle East and North Africa region, in particular in Syria, Iraq and Libya, as well as the threat of terrorism and violent extremism across the region and beyond, demonstrate that the security of the region has direct implications for the security of NATO. Peace and stability in this region are essential for the Alliance. There is a great concern over the ongoing crisis in Syria and its consequences, in terms of terrorism and the human tragedy it caused, with massive flows of migrants. Allies have swiftly contributed maritime assets to international efforts to stem the flow of irregular migration in the Aegean Sea in the context of the refugee and migrant crisis in cooperation with relevant national authorities and through the establishment of direct links between Maritime Command (MARCOM) and FRONTEX. Other territories of concern are Iraq, Libya and the Sahel-Saharan. Through Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) activities being implemented in Jordan, which include countering improvised explosive devices, explosive ordnance disposal and demining, as well as civilian-military planning and advice on security sector reform in Iraq, NATO is training Iraqis in selected areas. Allies are also ready to provide Libya with advice in the field of defence and security institution building, and to develop a long-term partnership, possibly leading to Libya's membership in the MD.

[www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_133169.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm)

- 26-27 October, Brussels, Belgium: Allied Defence Ministers discuss practical steps to take forward NATO's cooperation with the EU (progress in creating four NATO battalions in the Baltic States and Poland) and on how NATO can enhance its efforts to project stability in its neighbourhood. In that context,

ministers agree that training and capacity-building of Iraqi armed forces should begin in Iraq itself in January 2017, building on existing training of Iraqi officers in Jordan.

- 27-29 October, Rome, Italy: The NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO-PA) organizes a seminar gathering 140 parliamentarians from 39 countries. It addresses six themes: the situation in Libya and North Africa, the refugee crisis and border control, the political consequence of mass migration in Europe and the United States, the Western Balkans as a bridge between the MENA region and Europe, the situation in Syria and Iraq and the challenge of radicalization and terrorism in the West. Members of the NATO-PA Mediterranean and Middle East Special Group (GSM) also vote to adopt a report on the Expansion of Daesh into Libya and the western Mediterranean. This report explores the divisions that continue to undermine security in Libya, the international campaign against Daesh in Sirte and the links between that conflict and developments in Europe and the western Balkans, both of which have been an important source of foreign fighters working inside Daesh.

[www.nato-pa.int/Default.asp?SHORTCUT=4393](http://www.nato-pa.int/Default.asp?SHORTCUT=4393)

- 15 November, Nouakchott, Mauritania: A national crisis management centre, supported by NATO's Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme, is inaugurated to help authorities quickly respond to crises and coordinate an appropriate response. The centre will also improve civil protection, early warning of the population against threats and risks, and enhance preparedness against crises affecting national security. Regionally, it facilitates situational awareness in the different provinces of Mauritania. The centres receive and process emergency calls, track incidents, and share the information gathered with the national level and other regions that may be affected by a particular event.

- 6-7 December, Brussels, Belgium: NATO Foreign Ministers conclude two days of meeting during which they have made progress on a number of key issues, including cooperation with the EU. Ministers also take stock of the Alliance's efforts to project stability by help-

ing to build strong institutions in partner countries, training local forces, and tackling terrorism. Ministers review progress on NATO efforts to support the Counter-ISIL Coalition, the training of Iraqi officers, and maritime operations in the Mediterranean.

## 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 (counter-terrorism, 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.

### *2016 OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, 15th Winter Meeting, and the Mediterranean Forum*

- 25-26 February, Vienna, Austria: The Assembly's 15th Winter Meeting gathers more than 250 parliamentarians from 57 OSCE participating States. The parliamentary debate and keynote presentations focus on the refugee and migrant crisis in Europe and efforts to strengthen the collective response. The Vice-President of the OSCE PA, Christine Muttonen (MP, Austria), stresses that the current crises in Europe cannot be solved by a single country and instead need the attention and co-operation of the European Union, the United Nations and the OSCE on all levels. The enhancement of international co-operation is particularly important in dealing with the migration crisis and the

most affected countries in need of assistance and stabilization. Female refugees face exceedingly dangerous circumstances and require specific attention. OSCE field operations provide an important contribution by working together with border control authorities. Nevertheless, the OSCE and the OSCE PA could deliver more and should improve how they utilize their instruments in order to manage current and future challenges. The OSCE PA's three general committees (Political Affairs and Security; Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment; and Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions) also meet to hear addresses by high-level OSCE officials and from committee rapporteurs, who offer presentations on their ideas for reports and draft resolutions to be developed for the OSCE PA's 25th Annual Session in Georgia. Special debates are held in relation with each committee: "Transnational Security in the OSCE Area: Confronting Terrorism," "Migration management: opportunities and challenges to the economy in the OSCE region" and "The human rights of migrants and refugees." The Special Debate of the OSCE PA meeting is devoted to the refugee and Migrant Crisis. Speaking about the current migration crisis, EU Commissioner Stylianides urges greater dialogue and a more coordinated response to the situation. The crisis has put the EU under great pressure, testing its unity and principles. While he acknowledges the need to protect the EU's external borders, he nonetheless argues that raising walls will not solve the problem. Stylianides calls on OSCE PA to pledge its support to the resolution of the Syrian crisis, stopping the attacks on civilians, granting aid organizations full access to the people in need and free passage to safety in order to ameliorate the suffering of the Syrian people. The EU Commissioner says that governments should continue to work closely together and help Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey in making the everyday life of refugees better. The OSCE PA Third Committee (Human Rights) Chair Isabel Santos presents a report sharing the ideas, observations and recommendations resulting from trips to Turkey, Italy, Ser-

bia and the Czech Republic describing lessons learned from visits to refugee centres, OSCE field presences, UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration, the Red Cross and the EU, as well as NGOs, noting that the Parliamentary Assembly has an important role to play in addressing this crisis. In the debate, issues discussed include burden-sharing, addressing the root causes of the crisis, the dangers of a fragmented approach, EU policy strengths and shortcomings, the implementation of quotas, funding to origin and arrival countries, the social and economic integration of migrants, the importance of close engagement with the OSCE's Mediterranean Partner States, issues of criminality and human trafficking associated with the crisis, and the human rights of migrants and refugees. Parliamentarians also discuss several of the proposals in the report, including the idea of creating a high-level coordinating position to strengthen the Organization's work on migration. Other ideas generally supported by Members include establishing a thematic field mission on migration and enhancing co-operation with the OSCE's Mediterranean Partners by increasing parliamentary-level exchanges of best practices, as well as recommendations to provide increased financial and political aid to countries bordering Syria, and develop a better functioning resettlement mechanism. On 25 February OSCE PA Special Representative for Mediterranean Affairs Michel Voisin (MP, France) convenes a meeting with several OSCE Mediterranean Partners. The meeting includes the participation of parliamentarians and diplomatic representatives from Algeria, Israel, Morocco, and two representatives from the Palestinian Legislative Council. Discussions focus on ways to enhance the Mediterranean dimension of the Assembly's work and ideas to strengthen the role of the Assembly's Mediterranean Forum, as well as common issues and challenges facing the Mediterranean region.

[www.oscepa.org/documents/all-documents/winter-meetings/2016-vienna-1/reports-1/3220-2016-winter-meeting-report-web-version/file](http://www.oscepa.org/documents/all-documents/winter-meetings/2016-vienna-1/reports-1/3220-2016-winter-meeting-report-web-version/file)

#### *25th Annual Session of the OSCE PA and the quarter-century anniversary of the Assembly's work*

- 1-5 July, Tbilisi, Georgia: The 25th Annual Session of the OSCE PA brings together nearly 300 parliamentarians from 54 OSCE participating countries in Tbilisi. The Session is held under the theme "25 Years of Parliamentary Co-operation: Building Trust Through Dialogue," commemorating the quarter-century anniversary of the Assembly's work. 2016 is a landmark year for both the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the nation of Georgia, as it marks the 25th anniversary of the PA's establishment and the 25th anniversary of Georgia's independence. Emphasizing that recent problems in the OSCE area have largely been due to a lack of trust and co-operation, the President of the Parliament of Georgia insists on the need to promote dialogue to restore confidence and resolve conflicts. Featuring several days of parliamentary debate in committee and plenary meetings, the Session culminates in adoption by majority vote of the 2016 Tbilisi Declaration. The Declaration contains the Assembly's wide-ranging pronouncements and policy recommendations for the OSCE and its participating states in the fields of political affairs, economics, the environment and human rights, serving as policy guidance to governments and parliaments. The Declaration helps shape OSCE and national policy and it is complemented by a number of supplementary items relating to OSCE commitments and values. Stressing the theme of trust-building, the Declaration "reaffirms the undiminished validity and historic role of the guiding principles and common values of the Helsinki Final Act signed in 1975, including the commitments on politico-military, economic, environmental, human rights, and humanitarian issues." It regrets however the trend of gridlock in the OSCE and urges OSCE countries to enhance the level of co-operation in addressing common challenges. Among the issues covered in the Declaration are terrorism, the crisis in and around Ukraine, protracted conflicts in Georgia, countering corruption, energy, climate change, migration, and the rights of refugees. The Assembly also approves 15 resolutions

to supplement the Declaration, addressing issues such as fundamental freedoms in the Crimean Peninsula, prevention of child sexual exploitation, confidence-building measures in the Baltic Sea region, and ensuring that members of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly affected by international travel bans are able to attend OSCE events.

[www.oscepa.org/documents/all-documents/annual-sessions/2016-tbilisi/reports-19/3397-2016-annual-session-final-report/file](http://www.oscepa.org/documents/all-documents/annual-sessions/2016-tbilisi/reports-19/3397-2016-annual-session-final-report/file)

#### *2015 Autumn Meeting of the OSCE PA*

- 30 September to 2 October, Skopje, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: The OSCE PA holds an Autumn Meeting every year to enhance inter-parliamentary dialogue and provides a discussion forum about the Mediterranean region's political challenges. More than 170 parliamentarians from 49 OSCE participating states gather to discuss the theme of "Strengthening Confidence-Building Measures and Good Governance in the OSCE Region," and the role of parliamentarians in fostering co-operation to address ongoing and emerging crises in the OSCE area. During the opening session, the OSCE PA President, Christine Muttonen stresses the need for confidence-building in order to "engage with each other and search for common ground." On 30 September, the Mediterranean Forum is opened by OSCE PA Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs Michel Voisin (MP, France). Under the theme of "Improving Human Rights-Based Governance of International Migration," parliamentarians from more than a dozen countries offer comments and address questions on the ongoing refugee and migrant crisis, conflicts in the Mediterranean region, and the threat of violent extremism. Other issues related to the themes of "Developing Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in South East Europe: The Role of the OSCE" and "Good governance as a basis for fostering economic development in the OSCE" are discussed during the 2016 Autumn Meeting [www.oscepa.org/documents/all-documents/autumn-meetings/2016-skopje/reports-and-speeches/3469-final-report-of-2016-skopje-autumn-meeting/file](http://www.oscepa.org/documents/all-documents/autumn-meetings/2016-skopje/reports-and-speeches/3469-final-report-of-2016-skopje-autumn-meeting/file)



### 2016 OSCE Mediterranean Conference

- 5-6 October, Vienna, Austria: The conference brings together youth representatives from the Mediterranean region and beyond and is attended by several ministers and high-level representatives from international and regional organizations such as the OSCE Mediterranean Partner countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia), academia, civil society, and media, including a high-level delegation from the Government of National Accord of Libya. It focuses on “Youth North and South of the Mediterranean: Facing Security Challenges and Enhancing Opportunities” and addresses questions related to security and partnership between countries North and South of the Mediterranean. For the first time, the Mediterranean Conference provides a unique platform to engage youth in a discussion of the Mediterranean agenda, with a focus on sharing best practices in countering violent extremism, turning migration into an opportunity, and supporting youth empowerment at all levels to foster common security. OSCE SG Zannier underlines that youth is most affected by the phenomena agitating societies across the region, from radicalization to migration.

[www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/281811?download=true](http://www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/281811?download=true)

### Annual Ministerial Council – 23rd OSCE Ministerial Council

- 8-9 December, Hamburg, Germany: OSCE Foreign Ministers and delegations from the 57 OSCE participating states gather for the annual Ministerial Council. It acts as the main central decision-making and governing body and provides a rare opportunity for participating states and 11 Partners for Co-operation to engage in high-level multilateral and bilateral talks on their current security relations and concerns. Declarations and decisions are adopted on reinforcing the OSCE's role and efforts to address common issues. In the politico-military field, OSCE participating states decide to continue and build on the OSCE's efforts related to reducing the risks of conflict stemming from the

use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), they voice unanimous support for strengthening OSCE efforts to counter and prevent terrorism, and decide to enhance the use of Advance Passenger Information (API) with the aim of combating terrorism. Moreover, the Ministerial Council decides that Slovakia will chair the OSCE in 2019, while Italy will chair the Organization in 2018.

[www.osce.org/oscemc16](http://www.osce.org/oscemc16)

### Mediterranean Contact Group

- The major themes of the 2016 Austrian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group (MCG) are dialogue and inclusivity. The OSCE's Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation participated actively not only in various OSCE events, but also in numerous projects throughout the year. Five meetings of the MCG are held in Vienna during the course of the year. The first meeting, held on 29 February 2016, is attended by the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet, winner of the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize, which serves as a powerful symbol of successful civil society dialogue in difficult conditions. The Quartet members, representing the Tunisian bodies, focus on the challenges for Tunisia, such as economic development and combating radicalization. At the second meeting, on 14 March, three experts on migration issues share their experience in migration management and opinions on the current trends. Delegations call for the closer involvement of the OSCE in this field. On 19 April, the third meeting includes a panel discussion on interreligious dialogue and the fourth, on 14 June, is dedicated to the radicalization of youth and its prevention. Lastly, the fifth and final meeting, takes place on 18 November with a meeting on the topic of job creation and business opportunities for youth around the Mediterranean. As in previous years, the political dialogue between participating states and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation is complemented by a growing variety of practical co-operation projects. The projects cover all the key areas of the current OSCE and Mediterranean agendas. Most notably, in collaboration with Spain, Austria promotes

the organization of the first ever Mediterranean Contact Group Retreat outside Vienna, which is held in Madrid on 23 and 24 May. Another relevant initiative is the organization of a Regional Roundtable for North African Youth on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, taking place in Tunis on 3 May. Austria hands the Chairmanship of the MCG over to Italy in 2017 while Austria will be chairing the OSCE.

[www.osce.org/cio/286196?download=true](http://www.osce.org/cio/286196?download=true)

### Meeting of the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group in Madrid

- 23 May, Madrid, Spain: The meeting of the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group is preceded by an expert workshop entitled “Dialogue in search of social cohesion.” The two events seek to boost dialogue and mediation on the two shores of the Mediterranean. The goal of the workshop is to operate as a forum for discussion and exchange on the participation of civil society in informal mediation processes in the Mediterranean and its connection with governmental and institutional initiatives. Attending are 25 experts from think tanks, NGOs and other areas of civil society from countries in the Mediterranean Arc and Mediterranean partners. Participating states, together with the EU, aim to find synergies between action by civil society and governments, particularly in the case of Libya.

[www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/en/Sala-DePrensa/NotasdePrensa/Paginas/2016\\_NOTAS\\_P/20160523\\_NOTA109.aspx](http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/en/Sala-DePrensa/NotasdePrensa/Paginas/2016_NOTAS_P/20160523_NOTA109.aspx)

### 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 trans-

formed from a merely political forum to one for strengthened regional and multidisciplinary cooperation in the western Mediterranean. Its flexibility and informality have enabled a gradual opening up, and the participating ministers and senior officials now meet to discuss an increasing number of issues. Originally just a political compromise between Foreign Ministers dealing with security and stability, as well as economic integration, it later expanded to include other spheres, such as Education, the Environment and Renewable Energies, Home Affairs (since 1995), Migration (since 2002), Inter-parliamentary Relations (since 2003), Defence (since 2004), Tourism (since 2006) and Transport (since 2007). Due to its practical and operational nature, it is a forum for the exchange of ideas and the launch of new initiatives. It can also capitalize on its restricted geographical scope, which is limited to the western Mediterranean. This initiative has encouraged the insertion of Libya and Mauritania in the regional context.

#### *Main Meetings in 2016*

##### *Foreign Affairs*

- 28 October, Marseille, France: The 13th Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers of the 5+5 Dialogue in the Western Mediterranean takes place under the French and Moroccan co-Presidency. In addition to the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the ten countries of the Dialogue, other institutions participate as observers: Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), ALF and UfM. The main issue on the agenda is to stabilize the region and enhance solidarity in order to handle terrorism. Ministers take stock of the regional situation emphasizing the Libyan and Syrian crises. Regarding Libya, they reaffirm their exclusive support for the Government of National Accord, urge the international community to provide assistance to the Libyan people, and ask all parties involved to respond favourably to Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj's call for dialogue and reconciliation. In Iraq and Syria, they stress that only a political resolution of the crisis will allow the eradication of Daesh. That is why, in addition to their collective military effort, the

countries involved must step up their efforts in terms of stabilization, strategic communication, and prevention of terrorist financing, foreign terrorist fighters and radicalization. Nevertheless, Ministers welcome the successful operations conducted by the Iraqi forces against Daesh and encourage the government to implement the necessary reforms for national reconciliation. Regarding Syria, participants condemn in the strongest possible terms the unacceptable violence and attacks directed at the civilian population, especially in Aleppo, and the use of chemical weapons. They recall that there is no military solution to the Syrian conflict and appeal for the resumption of negotiations to set up a political transition, the only thing capable of preserving the territorial integrity of Syria, alleviating its people's suffering and building lasting peace. The Middle East Peace Process is also on the agenda. In particular, Ministers express their concerns about the resurgence of violence between Israelis and Palestinians. They condemn Israeli colonisation and continuing settlement activity in occupied Palestine. Regarding the Sahel region, they focus on the peace agreement in Mali and stress the necessity for the international community to provide strong support for Sahelian countries in order to promote all the initiatives to combat terrorism and radicalization. On the other hand, they establish and discuss the three main sectorial priorities: fostering training for young people and youth employment; cooperating for inclusive and sustainable economic and social development; taking action on migration and mobility. During the meeting, they have discussions with youngsters who have prepared recommendations thanks to the ALF. These recommendations include the training and mobility of young people, which are essential issues. Migration is also at the heart of this meeting; the leaders lend special attention to the fight against human and arms traffickers who exploit migrants crossing by sea from Libya to Europe. Ministers conclude that the challenge is not just to fight illegal immigration and rescue people at sea, but also to have an ambition for development. In the Final Declaration, Ministers stress their will to continue strengthening co-

operation and complementarity between the different frameworks and forms of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, namely: the 5+5 Dialogue, the UfM, the ALF, the EU, and the AMU.

Declaration:

[www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/conclusions\\_5\\_5\\_marseille\\_-\\_sans\\_signataires\\_cle8b9934.pdf](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/conclusions_5_5_marseille_-_sans_signataires_cle8b9934.pdf)

##### *Defence*

The 5+5 Defence Initiative was launched in 2004. The aim was to encourage mutual understanding among member countries and develop multilateral cooperation in order to promote security in the western Mediterranean by addressing common concerns in the spheres of security and defence. The presidency of the 5+5 Defence Initiative is held by each country participating in the Initiative in annual rotation following the alphabetical order of the countries in English. Algeria holds the 2016 presidency and France follows in the rotating presidency. The main meeting is the gathering of Defence Ministers (usually taking place in December) in the country holding the presidency. During the Ministerial meeting, Ministers approve the Action Plan for the year to come, and analyse and discuss the result of the activities that occurred during the year. The Chiefs of Defence also gather once a year in October to review the activities undertaken that year and approve the Activity Plan for the following year. The main goal of these meetings is to support political action undertaken by the 5+5 Defence Initiative, deepening the dialogue concerning regional military matters, understanding and acquaintance between the Armed Forces, and therefore improve the military cooperation between all ten countries of the Initiative.

- 20 October, Algiers, Algeria: The Chiefs of Staff of the 5+5 Defence Initiative member countries gather for their 8th meeting. The 5+5 Defence Initiative is one of the most active regional initiatives in terms of multilateral cooperation, consultations and dialogue on security stakes. The Chiefs of Army Staff of the member countries express their countries' willingness to strengthen "the growing power" of this process of co-

operation to face the different threats in the region and underline the activities undertaken by their countries in fields of common interest.

[www.defense.gouv.fr/actualites/international/le-cema-et-ses-partenaires-du-5-5-reunis-a-alger](http://www.defense.gouv.fr/actualites/international/le-cema-et-ses-partenaires-du-5-5-reunis-a-alger)

- 15 December, Algiers, Algeria: Defence Ministers of the 5+5 Defence Initiative gather to discuss regional challenges and promote consultations on prevailing issues, including the fight against terrorism. As chair of the 2016 Defence Initiative session, Algeria notes that the international and regional context has witnessed complex geopolitical shifts, which requires more intensive cooperation between regional partners. It also stresses that the 5+5 Initiative is a key militarily tool to overcome the scourge of terrorism, especially by stepping up information sharing. France, which will take the next rotating presidency, states that its main focus for 2017 will be the security issues related to climate change within the 5+5 area. [www.5plus5defence.org/fr/Pages/Initiative5-5-Defense-reunion-des-ministres-a-Alger.aspx](http://www.5plus5defence.org/fr/Pages/Initiative5-5-Defense-reunion-des-ministres-a-Alger.aspx)

#### Water

- 16 November 2016, Marrakech, Morocco: During the 22nd Conference of the Parties (COP22), a side event takes place for the signature of a Ministerial Declaration to endorse the Action Plan and Rules of Procedure for the 5+5 Water Strategy in the Western Mediterranean. The aim of this strategy is to promote sustainable water use at local, regional and national levels through the adoption of cross-cutting goals, management criteria and operational objectives in order to harmonize water policies in the Mediterranean. The Action Plan was promoted initially by the joint initiative of Spain and Algeria and is the result of six technical workshops that took place from 25 February 2015 to 24 June 2016. Both countries are actively involved in the peaceful resolution of international conflicts and hope this strategy may constitute a tool for preventive diplomacy, contributing to maintaining international peace and security by facilitating international cooperation on water issues. Marrakech Declaration:

[http://remoc.org/docs/wswm/112016\\_Marrakech/MarrakechDeclaration\\_signed.pdf](http://remoc.org/docs/wswm/112016_Marrakech/MarrakechDeclaration_signed.pdf)

Endorsed action plan

[http://remoc.org/docs/wswm/112016\\_Marrakech/Action%20Plan\\_Endorsed-Version\\_ENG.pdf](http://remoc.org/docs/wswm/112016_Marrakech/Action%20Plan_Endorsed-Version_ENG.pdf)

#### Tourism

- 11 July, Casablanca, Morocco: The 4th Ministerial Conference on Tourism of the Western Mediterranean takes place to discuss the effect of tourism on climate change. Ministers consider that, through urban and air transportation, tourism contributes to gases producing the greenhouse effect. Therefore, through the signing of the Declaration of Casablanca they aim to alleviate the effects of tourism on the environment and share effective strategies with other countries by limiting the impact of tourism activities on climate, in particular by increasing energy efficiency, improving modes of transportation, reducing water use, and collaborating with all national, regional and international institutions for the development of sustainable and responsible tourism.

Declaration of Casablanca:

[https://ma.ambafrance.org/IMG/pdf/declaration\\_de\\_casablanca.pdf?3562/b351d7f563e6fb313b878d34942f40581b5fb342](https://ma.ambafrance.org/IMG/pdf/declaration_de_casablanca.pdf?3562/b351d7f563e6fb313b878d34942f40581b5fb342)

#### 4. Adriatic Ionian Initiative (AII)

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 (AII) 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 AII 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 Croatia started in June 2015 and ended in May 2016, with Greece taking over from June 2016 until May 2017. Following the recent EU approach to support multilateral sub-regional cooperation, the AII started working, in 2010, on the idea of a Macro-Region for the Adriatic Ionian Region. Since then the AII 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 AII, the geopolitical environment has deeply changed. Slovenia in 2004 and Croatia in 2013 entered the EU the other Adriatic-Ionian East-side coastal Countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia), even if with different timeframes and conditions, are gradually approaching the EU within the Stabilization and Association Process framework, as a prelude to future EU membership.

#### *Main events during the Croatian Chairmanship*

The future of the Adriatic Sea is a priority of national interest to Croatia and, as Chair of the AII, the country wishes to strengthen interrelations among participating countries with a view to encouraging their development, including knowledge and information exchange processes, the preparation of infrastructure, and other development and com-



mercial projects. Croatia proposes political dialogue on the following aspects: redefining the objectives of the All itself; positioning the All in the newly-created political framework and cooperation area of the EUSAIR; collaborating with other initiatives and organizations in the geopolitical region. Taking over the presidency of the All from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, has become the first EUSAIR participant country to co-chair its Governing Board with the European Commission (EC). In the context of reducing the number of fora and avoiding the duplication of their subjects, Croatia will propose to merge the meeting of the Ministerial Council of the All with the annual meeting of EUSAIR foreign ministers.

- 24-23 February, Brussels, Belgium: The 3rd Governing Board (GB) of the EUSAIR, under the co-presidency of Croatia and the EC, focuses on the organization of the First EUSAIR Forum in Dubrovnik. In this context, both practical and conceptual aspects are discussed, including how to coordinate efforts with the All, considering that, for the first time, a “double hat” Ministerial Meeting will issue a single Adriatic and Ionian Council / EUSAIR Ministerial Declaration. The meeting is also intended to update delegates on the latest developments, the work plan for 2016 and the activities carried out by Thematic Steering Groups.

[www.aii-ps.org/index.php/news-events/news/item/214-eusair-governing-board-24february](http://www.aii-ps.org/index.php/news-events/news/item/214-eusair-governing-board-24february)

- 15-16 April 2016, Split, Croatia: 14th Conference of Speakers of Parliaments of the All. This meeting comes at a very crucial time for Regional Cooperation in the Adriatic and Ionian area, only few weeks before the first EUSAIR Forum to be held in Dubrovnik. The Conference results in strengthened parliamentary cooperation in the region on the refugee and migration crisis and on support to the EUSAIR. Furthermore, based on a decision taken during the previous Conference of Speakers in Neum, the participants establish a network of high officials of National Parliaments aimed at facilitating a permanent exchange of information and experiences among the parliaments on EUSAIR and All issues. The SG of the Initiative addresses the

Speakers informing them of recent All intergovernmental affairs, particularly concerning its role of intergovernmental anchorage to the EUSAIR.

[www.aii-ps.org/index.php/news-events/news/item/216-xiv-conference-speakers-parliaments-aii](http://www.aii-ps.org/index.php/news-events/news/item/216-xiv-conference-speakers-parliaments-aii)

- 12-13 May, Dubrovnik, Croatia: First EUSAIR Forum jointly organized by the EC and Croatia. It takes stock of the progress of the Strategy since its endorsement by the European Council in October 2014, and contributes to define the way ahead. The event provides ample possibilities for networking, and represents a great opportunity to reach out to a wide range of stakeholders from the Region, including national, regional and local administrations, the business sector, academia and civil society at large. The first “double hat” Adriatic and Ionian Council/ EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting also takes place on 12 May and it is chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Croatian Republic, Mr. Miro Kovač, and attended by the eight Ministers of Foreign Affairs of All, as well as by the eight Ministers responsible for EU funds and the EU Commissioner for Regional Policy. The Dubrovnik Declaration issued by Ministers focuses on renewing the commitment of the eight countries on going from words to deeds in the implementation phase of the EUSAIR, as well as on finding new ways the EUSAIR can support All countries affected by the refugee and migration crisis.

[www.aii-ps.org/index.php/news-events/news/item/218-first-%E2%80%9CAdriatic-and-Ionian-Council-EUSAIR-Ministerial-Meeting%E2%80%9D-held-in-dubrovnik-on-12-may](http://www.aii-ps.org/index.php/news-events/news/item/218-first-%E2%80%9CAdriatic-and-Ionian-Council-EUSAIR-Ministerial-Meeting%E2%80%9D-held-in-dubrovnik-on-12-may)

#### *Main events during the Greek Chairmanship*

With Greece’s Chairmanship of the All begins a new cycle of chairmanships on a rotational basis. Its main goal is to focus on organizing activities to be carried out by Round Tables, which were reformed in May 2015 so as to also serve the EUSAIR, in the fields of Blue Growth and Maritime Cooperation, Transport and Energy Connections, Environmental and Civil Protection, Sustainable Tourism and Culture, as well as

Inter-University Cooperation. Inspired by the Brussels Declaration of Foreign Affairs Ministers and the Adriatic and Ionian Council of 13th May 2015, according to which the Round Tables were turned into an auxiliary tool at the disposal of EUSAIR Thematic Steering Groups, the Hellenic All Chairmanship will further build on the work carried out by the preceding All Chairmanships as well as on the accomplishments and the progress achieved so far by EUSAIR Thematic Steering Groups. Moreover, the Hellenic All Chairmanship will place particular emphasis on cooperation in the sector of tourism and will make every effort to work closely with civil society and coordinate its actions within the framework of All inter-parliamentary cooperation, also taking into consideration the need to respond to the ongoing refugee and migration crisis.

- 13 September, Athens, Greece: The All-Permanent Secretariat visits the newly established Hellenic Chairmanship of the All. The annual visit of the Permanent Secretariat to the Presidency is meant to allow a meeting of the people in charge of the Presidency, both dealing with All and EUSAIR, to plan the activities of the newly established Chairmanship during the year and to share ideas on how to integrate intergovernmental activities within the All with the EUSAIR as much as possible. [www.aii-ps.org/index.php/news-events/news/item/224-visit-new-hellenic-chairmanship](http://www.aii-ps.org/index.php/news-events/news/item/224-visit-new-hellenic-chairmanship)

- 13 December, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina: All SG attends the Central European Initiative (CEI) Summit. The conference is focused on the migration and refugee crisis and on strengthening infrastructural connectivity in the area. The role of the All concerning the domains chosen by the CEI Chairmanship is outlined and these domains are considered to be key priority also for the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR). A stricter cooperation will possibly be achieved between All and CEI through the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding in the near future.

[www.aii-ps.org/index.php/news-events/news/item/228-aii-secretary-general-cei-summit-sarajevo](http://www.aii-ps.org/index.php/news-events/news/item/228-aii-secretary-general-cei-summit-sarajevo)

## 5. The League of Arab States

The League of Arab States is an association of 22 countries established in 1945 with the aim of improving coordination among its members on matters of common interest. The founding members of the League (Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Yemen) agreed to seek closer cooperation on issues regarding economics, communication, culture, nationality, social welfare and health. The LAS traditionally embodies both the idea of Pan-Arabism (the principle of an Arab homeland) and Arab nationalism (respect of each member state's sovereignty). Among LAS main achievements the 1950 Joint Defence and Economic Cooperation Treaty; 1995 Draft Agreement on turning the Middle East into a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction; and the 1999 Arab Agreement on Combatting Terrorism, should be mentioned. The highest body of the League is the Council, composed of representatives of member states, generally Foreign 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 Aboul Gheit since July 2016, who succeeded Nabil el-Araby. The Arab league struggles with dysfunction and disunity among its members. In 2002 it achieved remarkable consensus on the Arab Peace Initiative. The 2011 Arab revolts in Middle East and North Africa offered an occasion to propose actions and initiatives: it backed the UN action against Gaddafi's forces in Libya and sent, for the first time in history, a mission of observers to Syria (after suspending its membership in the League). Further information: [www.lasportal.org/en/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.lasportal.org/en/Pages/default.aspx)

### Main Events in 2016

#### 58th Meeting of the Executive Bureau of the Arab Justice Ministers Council

- 11-12 May, Cairo, Egypt: The 58th meeting of the Executive Bureau of the

Arab Justice Ministers Council is held at the headquarters of the Arab League General Secretariat under the chairmanship of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Discussion focuses on the fight against organized crime, terrorism and corruption, support to criminal justice in Arab countries, and the promotion of Arab and international cooperation in judicial and legal fields. The ministers also talk about various agreements, such as the Arab Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism and its mechanism of implementation, the Arab Convention on Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing, and the Arab judicial cooperation network on counter-terrorism and organized crime.

[www.lasportal.org/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=660](http://www.lasportal.org/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=660)

#### Consultative Meeting of the UN Security Council with the Arab League

- 21 May, Cairo, Egypt: The United Nations Security Council held an unprecedented consultative meeting with delegations from member states of the LAS, discussing, among others, developments of the Palestinian issue, the Middle East peace process, and updates on the situation in both Libya and Somalia. The participants also discuss the challenges posed by the surging numbers of refugees, displaced persons and illegal immigrants. Many representatives from both sides urge that such consultative meetings become regular, with some diplomats calling for making them a fixed mechanism between the two organizations. Mr. El Araby, SG of the organization, also stresses the need to reconsider the way the Security Council operates in order to become better able to shoulder responsibilities entrusted to it in dealing with crises that threaten international peace and security and resolving disputes by peaceful means. He points out the significant role played by regional organizations in that regard.

[www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=54007#.WWik7vkjHcs](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=54007#.WWik7vkjHcs)

#### 27th Arab Summit

- 26-27 June, Nouakchott, Mauritania: Dubbed the "Summit of Hope," it

takes place for the first time in Mauritania and it was expected to discuss many issues, including counter-terrorism, the Palestinian-Israeli Peace Process and turmoil in Syria and Libya, but hardly meets the expectations of a new phase for inter-Arab cooperation raised by Mauritanian hosts. Indeed, most Arab leaders decide not to show up, including Egyptian and Iraqi Presidents, and only seven of them attend the Summit. Addressing the opening session, Mauritanian President calls for the resumption of Palestinian-Israeli peace talks, which collapsed in 2014 and affirms that the region will remain unstable as long as there is no end to the Israeli occupation. During the meeting, Arab leaders assert that the Palestinian issue will be one of their top priorities, stressing the need for joint Arab action while expressing support for the French-led peace initiative. Officials also vow to defeat terrorism and reaffirm their commitment to follow the most effective practical methods to counter all threats to national security by developing counterterrorism mechanisms, while the Saudi Foreign Minister recalls the creation of the Islamic Military Alliance. In the final communiqué, they also briefly express the wish to see the conflicting parties in Syria reach a political solution, based on the preservation of the unity and stability of Syria. Concluding the Summit, Arab leaders underline the need to establish strong economic and cultural ties with the aim of striving for development, without specifying mechanisms of cooperation. The lack of cohesion and solidarity between the LAS members during this meeting comes from the fact that Arab countries accuse Iran of meddling in their affairs. In recent months, tension has escalated between the two sides since Saudi Arabia cut its diplomatic ties with Tehran earlier this year. Moreover, Saudi Arabia and its Arab allies accuse Tehran of arming Yemen's Shia Houthi group, which overran the capital of Sanaa and other provinces in 2014, and the conflict in war-torn Syria worsens Arab-Iranian relations.

<http://aa.com.tr/en/africa/arab-summit-kicks-off-in-mauritania/614311>

### *1st Ministerial Conference on Women and Achieving Peace and Security in the Arab Region*

- 5 September, Cairo, Egypt: The LAS and UN Women hold the first ministerial conference on “Women and Achieving Peace and Security in the Arab Region,” lasting two days. This gathering aims to facilitate the implementation of the regional strategy and plan for UN Security Council resolution 1325, which first recognized women’s disproportionate suffering in times of conflict and calls for their engagement in peace and security processes and for prioritizing them in humanitarian assistance. The conference is attended by Arab ministers and the SG of the LAS, as well as representatives from UN Women and international organizations. The participants acknowledge that the region can no longer afford any delay in reaching the representation women deserve in decision-making circles, given the fact that a large body of evidence compiled over the past few decades indicates that engaging women in peace and security processes and humanitarian assistance benefits not only women, but entire communities, increasing the chances of peace agreements lasting for 15 years by 35%. The conference concludes with a number of resolutions including the allocation of financial resources and technical assistance to develop National Action Plans to execute UN Security Council resolution 1325. The resolutions also include developing financing and monitoring mechanisms to enhance accountability and ensure serious commitment to the goals of the women, peace and security agenda, as well as ensuring a female presence of at least 30% in legislative bodies, decision-making circles and negotiation teams. The closing statement urges international organizations and donors to push for better reporting mechanisms for sexual violence, better access to services and medical and psychological care for women survivors of sexual violence, and better living conditions and access to basic services for women refugees in the region, especially Palestinian women. [www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/9/ministerial-conference-on-women-and-achieving-peace-and-security-in-the-arab-region](http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/9/ministerial-conference-on-women-and-achieving-peace-and-security-in-the-arab-region)

### *146th Arab League Council Ministerial Meeting*

- 8 September, Cairo, Egypt: The 146th session of the Arab League Council emphasizes its unified positions on Libya, Syria, Yemen and Iran. During this meeting, Tunisia takes over from Bahrain at the presidency of the Arab League Council until March 2017. Conflicts in Syria, Libya, Yemen, the Palestinian issue, as well as reform of Arab League mechanisms are the main topics discussed at the session. The event aims to help SG Ahmed Abul Gheit and the ministers to emphasize unified Arab positions on these issues. Mr. Abul Gheit calls for an Arab Initiative to resolve the crisis in Syria and asks Kuwait to involve the Secretariat of the League in the efforts to reach an agreement in the intra-Yemeni talks. The Ministerial Council issues a statement condemning the “hostile statements of the Iranian Supreme Leader,” Ali Khamenei and calling on Iran to stop interfering in Arab affairs. In addition, the Tunisian Foreign Minister stresses the need to intensify Arab and international efforts to help the Libyan people overcome their differences and opt for dialogue and consensus in order to preserve the unity of their country and its sovereignty, and restore security and stability within its territory. [www.tap.info.tn/en/Portal-Politics/8220852-tunisia-takes-over-from-bahrain-at](http://www.tap.info.tn/en/Portal-Politics/8220852-tunisia-takes-over-from-bahrain-at)

### *Trilateral Meeting on Libya*

- 25 October, Cairo, Egypt: a trilateral meeting is held at the headquarters of the LAS where the Arab League, the African Union and the UN agree on how to strengthen their cooperation in advancing the political process towards democratic transition in Libya. They reiterate their commitment to a Libyan-led solution to the conflict, and thus reject any foreign military intervention in Libya. They also reiterate their support to the Presidency Council and condemn recent acts of violence. The parties resolve to form a Troika to enhance cooperation and coordination to encourage national reconciliation, advance political dialogue and facilitate the implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement.

They also plan to establish a joint mission of envoys from the three organizations to encourage the parties to enter into dialogue.

<http://aa.com.tr/en/africa/arab-summit-kicks-off-in-mauritania/614311>

### *5th Meeting of the EU-LAS Strategic Dialogue*

- 1 December, Cairo, Egypt: Permanent representatives of the LAS and the EU Political and Security Committee (PSC) gather at the fifth meeting of the EU-LAS Strategic Dialogue. The discussions held by the Ambassadors mainly focus on terrorism and extremism as well as conflicts in the Middle East, including Syria, Israel-Palestine, Libya, Yemen and Iraq. According to a press release, representatives from the LAS and the EU welcome the strengthening of the Euro-Arab partnership as “an adequate regional response” to common political, economic, social and security challenges. Indeed, since the launch of this meeting in November 2015, progress has been made in developing Euro-Arab operational cooperation. Six strategic Cooperation Working Groups also meet in Cairo tackling issues such as conflict prevention, early warning and crisis management, humanitarian assistance, counter-terrorism, transnational organized crime and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and arms control. A new Working Group dedicated to migration is also launched, demonstrating the shared regional interests and common challenges faced on this issue.

<https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/egypt/16185/european-union-eu-political-and-security-committee-psc-and-the-league-of-arab-states-las-permanent>

### *4th Arab-European Foreign Ministers Meeting*

- 20 December, Cairo, Egypt: The meeting, attended by 49 Foreign Ministers of the LAS and the EU, is chaired on behalf of the Arabs by League SG, Aboul-Gheit, and on behalf of the EU by High Representative Mogherini. The ministers convene to discuss the ongoing crises in Syria, Libya and Yemen, among other things, and Mogherini

insists on including all regional actors in efforts for a lasting peace, since what happens in the above countries has a direct impact on Europe. She also stresses the need of a common strategy to deal with the phenomenon of terrorism and for increased cooperation on the issue of illegal migration. LAS SG Aboul-Gheit calls on European states to contribute politically and diplomatically to a solution of the Syrian conflict as well as to engage in the settlement of the Palestinian issue. At the end of the gathering, participants adopt a Declaration where they acknowledge the importance of engaging together to address common political, economic, social and security challenges, in particular, the fight against terrorism and the prevention of radicalization and its root causes, as well as migration. They also share their concerns on the security situation with which both the European countries and the Arab States are confronted, and confirm that these challenges are better addressed by a common Euro-Arab effort, in which both sides – in an equal partnership – share experiences, search for joint solutions and prepare the most adequate responses. Finally, they welcome the progress achieved on Euro-Arab cooperation as a means to provide an integrated response to face all these regional challenges, and express their determination to further strengthen relations to achieve regional and international stability and security as necessary conditions for prosperity and socio-economic development. [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/17651/declaration-adopted-fourth-league-arab-states-european-union-ministerial-meeting\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/17651/declaration-adopted-fourth-league-arab-states-european-union-ministerial-meeting_en)

## 6. Deauville Partnership

As a response to the upheavals in the Arab world in 2011, the G8 launched the Deauville Partnership (DP) at the summit held in May 2011 in the French city of Deauville. The aim of the partnership is to improve and coordinate international political and financial aid for countries in a transition process such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Jordan and Yem-

en. The partnership also aims at strengthening cooperation with relevant regional partners (Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and United Arab Emirates) and to guarantee coordination with international financial institutions (International Monetary Fund, World Bank) and key international organizations (OECD, UNDP, EBRD, EIB). The DP requested the WB to establish a special fund to support the transformation underway in several countries. The MENA Transition Fund was established in September 2012 and its aim is to provide funds for technical cooperation to improve governance and public institutions and foster sustainable and inclusive economic growth in such a way as to improve the lives of the citizens of these transition countries. In June 2014, Germany assumed the presidency of the initiative until 31 of December 2015, following France, the US and the UK. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development is currently managing the action to coordinate the IFIs and Development banks. The key events of the Partnerships are the annual meetings of Foreign Ministers and of Finance. The priorities of this initiative are supporting SMEs, strengthening the legal framework, promoting investments and improving opportunities for women. After Germany, Japan Chair the Partnership during 2016.

### *Main Events During 2015*

- 2 March, Tokyo, Japan: During the Deauville Partnership Senior Officials Meeting, participants gather to review the past initiatives and achievements, examine the current economic, political and social situation in the Middle East and North African region, and exchange views on how to inject new momentum into the Deauville Partnership for it to remain relevant to the region's needs, meaningful and sustainable. They establish that the Deauville Partnership should continue to serve as an important platform in the MENA region for dialogue between G7 members, Arab Countries in Transition (ACTs), regional partners and relevant international institutions in order to foster sound financial and economic evolution through long-term structural reforms and improved economic governance in the ACTs. Par-

ticipants also acknowledge the necessity to keep the momentum going and reaffirm their goal to reach the \$250 million capitalization goal for the MENA Transition Fund. Priority issues for the next 2-3 years include: assistance and support in the governance area, investment promotion, strengthening the governance and reform foundations that support the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises, financial inclusion, job creation, good governance, greater empowerment of women and youth in public and economic life, and social cohesion, as these elements contribute to promoting economic growth and social stability. The participants note the importance of women's economic empowerment to ACTs' overall economic growth, and they welcome Japan's proposal to host an expert meeting in 2016 to discuss women's public and socio-economic role.

[www.mofa.go.jp/files/000159937.pdf](http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000159937.pdf)

- 29-30 May, Rabat, Morocco: The MENA Transition Fund's 9th Steering Committee Meeting is co-chaired by Japan and Morocco and seeks to approve new projects with maximum impact submitted by Arab countries in transition and closely monitor on-going projects in the MENA region. The Trustee presents the Transition Fund's current funding status and outlook. Total pledges received at the time of the SC meeting amount to \$228.5 million. The participants reiterate the importance of achieving the goal of \$250 million, particularly given the very small funding gap. Donors also acknowledge the important role the Fund has been playing as a platform to facilitate project formulation in TCs. Indeed the brief presentation given by the Executive Secretary provides a financial and portfolio update and outlines the 20 country projects that were submitted. Finally the participants also stress that the most important issue is to open discussion on a further extension of the Fund's life because political and economic transitions take time to fully develop and yield results and they need strong support for the development of in-house capacity.

[www.menatransitionfund.org/sites/mena\\_trans\\_fund/files/documents/SCM9%20Minutes%20%28May%2029%20Rabat%29%20FINAL.docx](http://www.menatransitionfund.org/sites/mena_trans_fund/files/documents/SCM9%20Minutes%20%28May%2029%20Rabat%29%20FINAL.docx)

- 22 November, Barcelona, Spain: The UfM, as an observer in the Deauville Process, hosts the 2nd Deauville Partnership Senior Officials meeting, organized under the 2016 Japanese Presidency of the G7. The main focus of the meeting is to discuss the progress made on economic governance strategic support for SMEs and future activities. The promotion of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in the Arab Countries in Transition (ACTs) is an important pillar of the partnership in view of their potential for job creation and stability in the region. UfM SG Si-jilmassi underlines the importance of the regional dimension and the need to promote synergies between the UfM and Deauville Partnership frameworks. Participants at the meeting stress the importance of the MENA Transition Fund as a key tool in supporting ACT efforts towards structural reform. Italy, which will take over the G7 Presidency as of January 2017, lays out its future engagements and priorities as regards the MENA Transition Fund and the future work of the Deauville Partnership. <http://ufmsecretariat.org/ufm-secretariat-hosts-deauville-partnership-senior-officials-meeting/>

## 7. The Mediterranean Group

The Mediterranean Group gathers the Foreign Ministers of seven European Mediterranean countries, namely, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain on an informal basis. The proposal to create this group came from Spain and Cyprus with the aim of generating a space for informal consultations in order to resume the aims and initiative of the former Olive Group. It was formally presented to the EU Foreign Affairs Council in December 2013.

It is an informal coordination and consultation group of the seven EU Mediterranean Member States on issues of common interest.

- 26 February, Limassol, Cyprus: The 3rd informal ministerial meeting of the Med Group provides the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain and France with the opportunity to exchange views on pertinent aspects of the multitude of interconnected crises affecting the EU and its citizens, both in our neighbourhood and beyond. Ministers discuss the complex relations of the countries in the Middle East and how their direct and indirect involvement in the Syrian conflict is impacting the political process in Syria and the stability of Lebanon. About Syria, the Ministers affirm that there can be no military solution to the Syrian conflict, support diplomatic efforts for a political resolution of the conflict and desist from any, particularly military, action that could derail this. The Ministers recall that all parties should immediately and unconditionally stop all attacks against civilians and allow humanitarian agencies access throughout Syria in order to reach all people in need. Regarding Lebanon, the Ministers highlight the importance for Lebanon to elect a President according to the constitutional process and to have a fully functioning government able to respond to the pressing security and economic challenges it faces. The Ministers also stress the important role of the EU and its Member States in supporting the resilience Lebanon and Jordan have vis-à-vis regional spill-overs, in strengthening the capacity of their institutions in the fields of counter-terrorism and security. Secondly the Ministers discuss the political situation in Libya and urge the House of Representatives to approve the re-

cently proposed Government of National Accord as soon as possible. A Government of National Accord would also be a crucial partner in effectively tackling the threats and challenges to Libya, including terrorism, particularly considering the growing presence of Daesh and other extremist groups. The Ministers also consider the broader security links between Libya and the Sahel region and discuss how the trans-border security vacuum is providing terrorist organizations with a space in which to propagate. Reinforcing security in the Sahel region remains a key objective of the EU and the stability of Mali is an important factor, as stipulated in the EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel. Regarding migration, and building on previous Joint Declarations of the “Med Group,” the Ministers express their continuous commitment as a matter of priority, based on the principles of solidarity, humanitarian approach and safeguarding the EU’s external borders, while fully respecting obligations foreseen by international law. The Ministers reconfirm their common belief that migration remains the major issue testing the EU’s unity and ability to respond to an international problem, which requires a comprehensive and systematic approach to be pursued at the EU level. They underline the importance of reforming the EU’s existing framework so as to ensure an efficient asylum policy and full implementation of decisions on relocation and readmission, as well as measures to ensure effective returns.

[www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/SalaDePrensa/ElMinisterioInforma/Documents/Joint%20Comunicu%C3%A9%20of%20the%203rd%20informal%20Med%20Group%2025-26%20February%202016%20-%20FINAL.pdf](http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/SalaDePrensa/ElMinisterioInforma/Documents/Joint%20Comunicu%C3%A9%20of%20the%203rd%20informal%20Med%20Group%2025-26%20February%202016%20-%20FINAL.pdf)