

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; and enhance efforts to destroy or control arms. The MD started in 1994 with five participating countries, which included Egypt, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, followed a few years later by Algeria and Jordan. The Dialogue has the following features: it is progressive in terms of participation and content; it is generally bilateral in the NATO+1 format but also admits multilateral meetings in the NATO+7 format; the same basis is offered to all the partners according to a non-discrimination principle; however each country can decide to intensify its own participation in the spirit of self-differentiation through an Individual Cooperation Programme (ICP) and NATO will not impose the extent of the cooperation; it is comple-

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

small arms & light weapons, public diplomacy, scientific and environmental cooperation, as well as consultations on terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The military dimension of the practical cooperation includes invitations to Dialogue countries to observe – and in some cases participate – in NATO/PfP military exercises, attend courses and other academic activities at the NATO School (SHAPE) in Oberammergau (Germany) and the NATO Defense College in Rome (Italy), and visit NATO military bodies. The Individual and Partnership Cooperation Programme (IPCP), which replaces the previous Individual Cooperation Programme (ICP) framework document, is aimed at enhancing bilateral political dialogue as well as tailoring cooperation with NATO according to key national security needs. Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia have all agreed tailored ICPs with NATO. At the 2014 Wales Summit two important initiatives were endorsed: the Partnership Interoperability Initiative and the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) Initiative. The first provides measures to ensure that the connections built up over years of operations and exercises are deepened so that partners contribute to future NATO-led operations (currently only Jordan has access to enhanced cooperation). The DCB Initiative is demand-driven and aimed at NATO's commitment with partners. This package includes: seven areas of cooperation (cyber defence, military exercises, Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices cooperation, border security...); the invitation to participate in the 2015 NATO Cyber Coalition exercise (the first MD countries to do so); and a Science for

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

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

Main Events in 2020

- 6 January, Brussels, Belgium: The North Atlantic Council addresses tensions in the Middle East and implications for NATO's training mission in Iraq. As a measure to protect NATO's personnel, the Alliance temporarily suspends training activities for Iraqi forces on the ground, ready to resume it when the situation permits. Following the briefing of the US on attacks on coalition forces in Iraq and the strike against General Soleimani, the Allies also express their concern about Iran's destabilizing activities in the Middle East. www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_172344.htm
- 10 January, Brussels, Belgium: NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg attends the extraordinary meeting of the EU Foreign Ministry Affair Council (FAC) on the situation in the Middle East. Speaking to reporters, the Secretary General stresses the need for NATO and the EU to keep supporting Iraq and fighting ISIS. www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_172429.htm
- 14 January, Brussels, Belgium: King Abdullah II of Jordan visits NATO headquarters to discuss regional security with Allied ambassadors during a meeting of the North Atlantic Council. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stresses that Jordan is one of the Alliance's closest global partners, par-

ticularly with regard to countering international terrorism.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_172529.htm

- 28 February, Brussels, Belgium: A special meeting of the North Atlantic Council takes place following a request by Turkey to hold consultations under Article 4 of the Washington Treaty on the situation in Syria. Allies offer their condolences to Turkey for the death of a soldier near Idlib, condemn air strikes by the Syrian regime and Russia in the province and call for them to end their offensive.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_173927.htm

- 9 March, Brussels, Belgium: NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg meets the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to discuss the security situation in Syria. The Secretary General confirms NATO's support to Turkey against threats from Syria and address the impact of migration movements on the border between Greece and Turkey. www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_174281.htm

- 14 May, Brussels, Belgium: NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg talks with the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on the phone to discuss NATO's support to Allies in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and the situation in Libya. The Secretary General commends Turkey for its medical support to other Allies and partners, in response to requests made through NATO's Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre. Regarding Libya, he stresses that NATO is prepared to help the country in the area of defence and security institution building, in response to the request made in this direction by the Prime Minister of the Government of National Accord and in close coordination with other international efforts, including those of the UN and the EU. The Secretary General also reminds all parties to respect the UN arms embargo and that NATO fully supports UN efforts to find a political solution.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_175793.htm

- 16 May, Brussels, Belgium: NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg talks with the Prime Minister of Libya, Fayez al-Sarraj on the phone to discuss

the latest developments in the country and express his concern over the latest escalation of violence, highlighting that there is no military solution to the conflict. He also calls for the UN arms embargo to be respected and confirms that NATO remains prepared to assist Libya with building up its defence and security institutions, as restated by NATO Heads of State and Government in 2018 and in response to the request by the Government of National Accord.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_175873.htm

- 22 June, Bizerte, Tunisia: The Standing NATO Maritime Group Two (SNMG2) exercises with two Tunisian Navy units in the waters north of Bizerte, Tunisia. According to Rear Admiral Paolo Fantoni, Commander of SNMG2, this training opens a new chapter of further cooperation at sea between Tunisia and NATO, already in partnership under NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue. The objectives are, for both sides, to enhance interoperability, improving maritime security and deterring potential terrorist threats at sea.

<https://mc.nato.int/media-centre/news/2020/snmg2-exercise-with-tunisian-navy-in-the-mediterranean->

- 19 August, Brussels, Belgium: NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg talks with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu on the phone to discuss developments in the eastern Mediterranean and Libya. The Secretary General expresses concerns regarding current tensions in the eastern Mediterranean and stresses that the situation must be resolved in a spirit of Allied solidarity, recalling that Turkey and Greece have been committed to NATO for decades to address common security challenges. On Libya, the Secretary General emphasizes NATO's full support to the work of the United Nations to find a political solution to the crisis, calling on all parties involved to support the UN-led process and respect the UN arms embargo. He also expresses support for the Berlin Process as complementary to the UN's efforts to achieve peace in Libya.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_177523.htm

- 28 August, Brussels, Belgium: NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg

talks with the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on the phone to discuss developments in the eastern Mediterranean. This follows the Secretary General's recent discussions on the eastern Mediterranean with the Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, and with the Greek foreign and defence ministers earlier in the week.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_177661.htm

- 7-8 September, Istanbul, Turkey: From 7 to 8 September 2020, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach, Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, visits Istanbul and Ankara for a two-day official visit as part of his regular visits to Allied member nations. The includes meetings with the Minister of Defence, Mr. Hulusi Akar, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Mevlut Cavusoglu, and with the Chief of the Turkish General Staff, General Yasar Guler. In Ankara, the Chairman visits NATO's Centres of Excellence. During the meetings, discussions focus on Turkey's contributions to NATO operations, missions and activities, the regional security situation and NATO 2030.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_177838.htm

- 23-24 September, Brussels, Belgium: As part of his regular consultations with the leaders from Turkey and Greece, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg talks on the phone with the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and with the Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis about the situation in the eastern Mediterranean. The Secretary General reiterates the importance of dialogue and de-escalation, and welcomes the announcement that Turkey and Greece will hold exploratory diplomatic talks.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_178323.htm

- 1 October, Brussels, Belgium: Following a series of technical meetings between the Military Representatives of Greece and Turkey at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, a bilateral military de-confliction mechanism designed to reduce the risk of incidents and accidents in the eastern Mediterranean is established. It includes the creation of a hotline between Greece and Turkey, to facilitate de-confliction at sea or in the air.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_178523.htm

- 5 October, Ankara, Turkey: NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg visits Ankara to meet the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, and Defence Minister Hulusi Akar about the security situation in the region, NATO's support for Turkey, and the establishment of a military de-confliction mechanism with Greece. The leaders also address the situation in Libya and Syria, the continued violence in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, and Turkey's acquisition of the S-400 system.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_178545.htm

- 10 December, Mediterrean Sea: NATO Operation Sea Guardian has completed its last focused security patrol for the year. As part of this activity which began on 24 November, NATO maritime assets have been helping provide an accurate maritime picture to NATO commanders, enforcing counter-terrorism measures, and working with partners. Focused operations are carried out by Sea Guardian six times a year and take place in a designated geographic area of the Mediterranean. During such operations, NATO vessels interact with non-NATO maritime actors, including commercial ships, to assess current trends and share maritime situational awareness.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_180025.htm

2. OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation

The relationship between the OSCE and its MPCs dates back to the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, which recognized that security in Europe is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean as a whole. Immediately after Helsinki, Mediterranean non-participating states were invited to a specific meeting on Mediterranean issues related to economic, social, environmental, scientific and cultural topics. It was at the 1993 Rome Ministerial Council meeting when Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Morocco and Tunisia requested a closer cooperation and finally became partners for cooperation in 1995 (Jordan joined in 1998).

In 1994 an informal contact group of experts met to conduct a dialogue with MPCs to facilitate the exchange of information of mutual interest and generate ideas: the Mediterranean Contact Group (MCG). Within the political framework of this relationship, besides the MCG, the main elements are: the annual OSCE Mediterranean Conference, certain annual OSCE events, the OSCE PA Mediterranean Forum and the visit by the Secretary General (SG). The OSCE Mediterranean Conference is generally attended by international organizations, parliamentarians, academics and NGOs, and it provides a place for the exchange of ideas and exploring new ways to enhance cooperation. At the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting, partners engage in high-level meetings with the OSCE Troika (incoming, current and past Chairmen-in-Office) and the OSCE SG. In 2003, OSCE participating states decided to extend the fields for cooperation with partners (counterterrorism, border issues, economic and environmental activities, trafficking in human beings, election observation, media freedom) besides encouraging them to voluntarily implement OSCE commitments. Since 2007, a special fund has been created to attend to Partners' needs to participate in specific activities. The wave of upheavals that swept across the southern Mediterranean as of 2011 confirmed the need to reinforce and adapt the Partnership to assist Partners on their way to democracy and stability. The Contact Group serves as 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 par-

liamentary 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.

2020 OSCE Mediterranean Conference

- 3 November, Vienna, Austria: The conference is held under the topic of "Promoting security in the OSCE Mediterranean region through sustainable development and economic growth" and is host by Sweden, as the Chair of the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia). During 2020, Sweden as the Chair has promoted political dialogue with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation on a range of crucial topics with a view to intensifying the exchange of best practices and identifying areas for long-term co-operation. The issues covered by the conference are information technology and the fight against human trafficking; women, peace, and security; youth engagement and participation to counter violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism.

www.osce.org/event/2020-osce-mediterranean-conference

2020 Annual Security Review Conference

- 23-25 June, Vienna, Austria: The Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC) is the OSCE's main event for enhancing dialogue on regional security challenges. Under the 2020 Albanian OSCE Chair, participants focus on "Building stability through dialogue" and exchange views on the security situation in the OSCE region as well as on the impacts of COVID-19 on security and stability in the OSCE area to identify joint responses to some of the unprecedented challenges caused by the pandemic. In particular, participants discuss security and stability in the OSCE region in light of developments with respect to Ukraine, and the Structured Dialogue, a process that explores new ways of addressing politico-military challenges and revers-

ing the negative trends in the European security architecture. Other topics covered are: transnational threats – current and future trends in the OSCE area and beyond; conflict and crisis situations in the OSCE area – building security and confidence; conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures – challenges and opportunities; the OSCE's role in early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, conflict resolution, and post-conflict rehabilitation – lessons learned and the way ahead.

www.osce.org/event/2020-annual-security-review-conference

Annual Ministerial Council – 27th OSCE Ministerial Council

- 3-4 December, Tirana, Albania: The Ministerial Council is the central decision-making and governing body of the OSCE and provides an opportunity to review and assess the Organization's activities and strengthen dialogue on security issues in the OSCE area. Due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, for the first time, the Ministerial Council is held via video teleconferencing (VTC). At the end of the Council, the parties decide to appoint Ms. Helga Schmid as the Secretary General of the OSCE, Mr. Matteo Mecacci as Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Mr. Kairat Abdрахmanov as OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and Ms. Teresa Ribeiro as OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media for a period of three years with effect from 4 December 2020. They also decide that North Macedonia will take over the chairmanship for 2023 and that the 28th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council will be held in Stockholm on 2 and 3 December 2021. Moreover, the parties express their commitment to strengthening co-operation in countering transnational organized crime and co-operation with the OSCE Asian Partners. They also discuss the prevention and combat of corruption through digitalization and increased transparency, as well as the prevention and eradication of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the Ne-

gotiations on the Transnistrian Settlement Process in the “5+2” format.

www.osce.org/event/mc_2020

OSCE Informal Ministerial Gathering (did not take place in 2020)
19th Autumn Meeting of OSCE PA (expected to take place in October 2021)

Mediterranean partners for Co-operation

- 11 May, Vienna, Austria: The Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group, under the Swedish Chair, hold their first virtual meeting. It focuses on the rapid development of information technology and its tremendous impact globally on trafficking in human beings (THB), including in the OSCE region and across the Mediterranean. It is announced that the 2020 programme will focus on topics such as countering trafficking in human beings, women, peace and security, youth and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT).

www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/452098

3. 5+5 Dialogue

The 5+5 Dialogue comes from a French proposal and was set up on 10 October 1990 during a ministerial meeting in Rome. It gathers the ten countries of the western Mediterranean Basin: five countries from the Arab Maghreb Union (Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Libya and Tunisia) and five members of the European Union (France, Spain, Italy, Portugal and Malta who joined in 1991). The 5+5 Dialogue has a flexible and informal nature. Over the years, it has been transformed from a merely political forum to one for strengthened regional and multidisciplinary cooperation in the western Mediterranean. Its flexibility and informality have enabled a gradual opening up, and the participating ministers and senior officials now meet to discuss an increasing number of issues. Originally just a political compromise between Foreign Ministers dealing with security and stability, as well as economic integration, it later expanded to include other spheres, such as Education, the Environment and Renewable Energies, Home Affairs (since 1995),

Migration (since 2002), Inter-parliamentary Relations (since 2003), Defence (since 2004), Tourism (since 2006) and Transport (since 2007). Due to its practical and operational nature, it is a forum for the exchange of ideas and the launch of new initiatives. It can also capitalize on its restricted geographical scope, which is limited to the western Mediterranean. This initiative has encouraged the insertion of Libya and Mauritania in the regional context.

Main events in 2020

- 1-2 March, Marrakech, Morocco: the 8th Ministerial Conference of the 5+5 Dialogue on Migration and Development gather in Marrakech to discuss the migration and development issue in the western Mediterranean, with representatives from the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), in attendance as observers. Ministers reaffirm the relevance of the 5+5 Dialogue to address migration issues and highlight the need to cooperate and coordinate for a better management of migrations. The meeting ends with the adoption of a declaration listing the actions to be undertaken in five broad lines: coordination of national migration policies; facilitation of legal migration and mobility; the strengthening of the links between migration and development; migrant integration policies; policies to fight irregular migration, smuggling of migrants and human trafficking. The Declaration calls for the implementation of a “Roadmap towards the operationalization of the conclusions” of the Ministerial Conference in order to translate the Ministers’ commitments into concrete projects and practical programmes.

<https://medthink5plus5.org/en/2020/03/10/8th-ministerial-conference-of-the-55-dialogue-on-migration-and-development/>

- 20 May: The “Building Resilience to Health Crisis through Enhanced Cooperation in the Western Mediterranean:

The Role of the 5+5 Dialogue in a Post COVID-19 Era” webinar brings together experts from different countries of the 5+5 Dialogue to discuss the impacts of the health crisis on the western Mediterranean. The participants highlight the need to further engage in a long-term cooperation on health issues in the western Mediterranean. The webinar will lead to a publication of a report gathering the recommendations that experts put forward during discussions.

<https://medthink5plus5.org/en/2020/05/22/medthink-55-webinar-towards-a-strengthened-health-cooperation/>

- 20 October, online: On the occasion of the 16th Foreign Affairs Ministerial Meeting of the 5+5 Dialogue, which celebrates its 30th anniversary (1990-2020), the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the 10 countries of the 5+5 Dialogue of the Western Mediterranean gather in a virtual meeting. The videoconference, organized under the title “Together for Collective Security and Partnership in the Western Basin of the Mediterranean” provides the opportunity for Foreign Affairs Ministers to advocate for the strengthening and deepening of the 5+5 political framework. The main topic of the meeting is security cooperation between countries of the western Mediterranean. In this regard, countries face a number of challenges, including those related to the fight against terrorism and radicalization, the conflicts in Libya and Sahel, and the Middle East Peace Process. The post-COVID-19 economic recovery is also at the centre of the ministers’ discussion. They acknowledge the need to foster synergies between the socioeconomic recovery plans of the countries of the region, especially through the development of partnership in areas with potential such as digitalization, sustainable development and the integration of industrial supply chains. Finally, they discuss topics related to youth, education, mobility, sustainable development, and migration and development. Their conclusions are outlined in the Tunis Declaration. In 2021, Spain will succeed Malta as the Northern co-chair of the Dialogue.

<https://medthink5plus5.org/en/2020/10/27/16th-meeting-of-the-ministers-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-55-dialogue/>

- 11 November: The MedThink 5+5 webinar is held under the title “From Crisis to Recovery in the Western Mediterranean: Challenges and Opportunities on the road to a Post-COVID-19 Sustainable Growth.” The webinar is organized by the European Institute of the Mediterranean in collaboration with the Policy Centre for the New South. The participants discuss the prospects of the severe economic contraction as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, 5+5 Dialogue countries present their strategies to firstly mitigate the impact of the economic recession on the productive tissue and employment, and secondly to help re-activate the economy. Finally, they also discuss the opportunities that the post-COVID-19 era can offer to the region’s countries, as well as the role of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in financing the recovery. The webinar will lead to the publication of a report gathering the recommendations put forward by experts during the discussions. <https://medthink5plus5.org/en/2020/11/12/new-webinar-medthink-55-from-crisis-to-recovery-in-the-western-mediterranean/>

4. Adriatic Ionian Initiative (All)

After the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, the fragmentation of the former Yugoslavia and the growing tensions among ethnic, cultural and religious groups in the Balkan area, the EU, in its attempts to cope with these crises, promoted the “Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe” for south-eastern European countries hoping to join the Union in the future. Within this treaty, at the Finnish EU Summit in 1999, the Italian Government presented the “Adriatic Ionian Initiative.” The Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (All) was established at the Summit on the Development and Security of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, held in Ancona (Italy) in May 2000. At the end of the Conference, the Foreign Ministers of the participating countries, Italy, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece and Slovenia signed the “Ancona Declaration” in order to strengthen regional cooperation to promote political and economic stability, thus creating a solid base for the pro-

cess of European integration. Today, the All has eight members: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. The initiative’s Chairmanship rotates every May/June according to alphabetical criteria. The Chairmanship of Greece started in June 2016 and ended in May 2017, with Italy taking over from June 2017 until May 2018. Following the recent EU approach to support multilateral sub-regional cooperation, the All started working, in 2010, on the idea of a Macro-Region for the Adriatic Ionian Region. Since then the All Participating states, started raising awareness regarding the need to establish a Macro-Region for the Adriatic Ionian basin. The European Council has given a mandate to the EU Commission to present a new “Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region” (EUSAIR) by the end of 2014. The EUSAIR has been endorsed by the Council on 24 October 2014 and is now in its implementation phase. Many years after the establishment of the All, the geopolitical environment has deeply changed. Slovenia in 2004 and Croatia in 2013 entered the EU and the other Adriatic-Ionian Eastside coastal Countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia), albeit with different timeframes and conditions, are gradually approaching the EU within the Stabilisation and Association Process framework, as a prelude to future EU membership. After the overhaul of the All Round Tables approved in 2015, the highest political body of the All is also reformed. For the first time in Dubrovnik (12-5-2016) a double hat “Adriatic and Ionian Council / EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting” is held within the EUSAIR Forum. This now makes the two exercises (All and EUSAIR) inseparable from each other and mutually beneficial. The All focus for 2017 is on stakeholders and civil society with the ultimate goal of bringing them into the picture and making the subsidiarity principle work. The All is going to foster this process in two ways: firstly, by strengthening All Round Tables and connecting them strictly with the EUSAIR Thematic Steering Groups (TSGs). In order to make them effective, the All-PS finances the participation of selected experts coming from Adriatic and Ionian Civil Society (universities,

NGOs, associations, chambers of commerce) and from local administrations; and, secondly, by connecting the All Round Tables with the EUSAIR Stakeholders Platform, as soon as it is fully operational.

Main Events during the Serbian Chairmanship

- The Republic of Serbia formally assumes the year-long presidency of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (All) and the chairmanship of the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) from Montenegro on 1 June 2019 and remains in this position until May 2020. In order to ensure full coordination within the country for the duration of the presidency, as well as to provide a continuous exchange of views and assure cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, the government of the Republic of Serbia renews the Working Group for the Cooperation with the European Union in the Adriatic and Ionian Region (established in 2014) which comprises 22 members from different line ministries of the Serbian government. The Republic of Serbia will continue its activities aimed at developing regional cooperation and, in particular, at strengthening All as a regional structure, relying, certainly, on the already agreed and commenced activities. It is, therefore, necessary to focus future joint activities on several key priorities, such as: infrastructure connectivity, promotion of cooperation in the areas of culture and creative industries, sustainable tourism and youth exchange (like, for example, the establishment of the All Youth Chamber Orchestra, etc.). For the purpose of implementing the above-mentioned priorities, the inclusion of economic and financial segments in the presidency/ chairmanship priorities are deemed a practical necessity, and sustained efforts will be invested to implement them in practice. In that context, special focus will be placed on the cooperation between chambers of commerce and industry aimed, primarily, at improving economic connectivity, increasing employment and reducing labour emigration.
- 18-19 February, Brussels, Belgium: 2nd All Committee of Senior Officials back-to-back with the first session of

the 11th EUSAIR Governing Board, chaired by Mr. Jankovic Pavle, takes place to discuss the calendar of upcoming events, the organization of the 20th All Anniversary Celebrations and updating rules of procedures due to the inclusion of the Republic of San Marino in the All. According to the Serbian Chairmanship, the upcoming activities include: four EUSAIR Thematic Steering Group meetings and the 5th EUSAIR annual meeting; a Round Table on Youth Connectivity; the Round Table on Transnational tourist products as a way of connecting the coastline with the hinterland; the 20th anniversary of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative on 22-24 of March; the 9th Energy and Investment International Day; the International Fair of Technics and Technical Achievements and the International Agricultural Fair. Regarding the core EUSAIR GB, the discussion on the activities and the expected outcomes of the Serbian Chairmanship' Programme and the upcoming 5th EUSAIR Annual Forum needs to be highlighted.

www.aii-ps.org/news/329-ii-aii-committee-of-senior-officials-and-11th-eusair-governing-board-held-in-brussels-18-february-2020.

- 20-21 February, Athens, Greece: over 240 delegates from 53 countries and international organizations gather in Athens, at the 14th Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), to discuss counterterrorism, MENA region challenges, climate change and economy. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean region is the principal forum where the Parliament of the Euro-Mediterranean region deliberate to support the creation of the best political, social, economic and cultural environment for the fellow citizens of the Member States. During the 14th Plenary Session, PAM parliamentarians review reports and vote on resolutions concerning the critical issues, such as the threat from ISIS terrorists, the peace process in the Middle East region, the economic integration in the region, the challenges related to climate change following COP25, mass migration and the promotion of Human rights.

www.aii-ps.org/news/330-aii-permanent-secretariat-attended-the-14th

[pam-plenary-session-athens-20-21-february](http://www.aii-ps.org/news/331-north-macedonia-officially-joins-the-eusair)

- 2 April: North Macedonia officially becomes the ninth participating country of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), joining Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. The country participates in All Strategy governance structures and, together with Italy and Serbia, coordinates the Pillar 2- Connecting the Region, whose aim is to develop interlinked sustainable transport and energy networks in the macro-region. Macedonia's participation in the EUSAIR reinforces the macro-regional Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region and will help the region progress on key areas: blue growth, the environment, tourism and transport. The two official documents that testify the accession of North Macedonia to EUSAIR are the Addendum to the EUSAIR communication and the New EUSAIR Action Plan.

www.aii-ps.org/news/331-north-macedonia-officially-joins-the-eusair.

- 27 May: The meeting of the Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative and European Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR), hold via videoconference from Belgrade at the end of one year of successful Serbian Chairmanship, aims to deal with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting stresses the need to start border reopening, economic recovery and continue fighting against COVID-19. Participants underline the fact that fostering regional cooperation is key to mitigate the post COVID-19 challenges. Also, the Adriatic and Ionian Council/EUSAIR Ministerial Meeting formalizes the decision of confirming Ambassador Giovanni Castellaneta's second mandate, as Secretary General of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative. The Ambassador has covered the position of All Secretary General from June 2017, and will stay in charge until May 2023. Lastly, The Belgrade Declaration, the annual strategic document which acknowledged the results achieved by the Chairmanship and set strategic guidelines for the future, will follow in the coming weeks.

www.aii-ps.org/news?start=30.

Main Events during the Slovenian Chairmanship

- Slovenia takes over the Chairmanship in June 2020 and remains in this position until May 2021. During its presidency, it seeks to implement high-profile activities to develop regional cooperation and strengthen All as a regional structure, relying on the already agreed and initiated activities. It also places particular attention on the promotion of EU standards and values and continues to support the European Integration aspirations of Western Balkan countries. The activities planned during the one-year presidency focus on four keys priorities: 1. infrastructure connectivity; 2. the promotion of cooperation in the areas of culture and creative industries; 3. youth issues; and 4. digitalization. Furthermore, in light of the ongoing challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chairmanship must deal with the current health and humanitarian situation. Thus the organization of events during its Chairmanship will depend on the region's sanitary condition. Slovenia will also promote the active participation of the Fora of civil society (Chambers of Commerce, Cities, and Universities) that have proven to be key actors in addressing systemic challenges of common interest. Besides this, during its Chairmanship, the country will emphasize All's parliamentary aspect, which helps provide broad discussions and, as a consequence, will lead to further political support from governments
- 18 June, online: On this date, the high-level political representatives of the All/EUSAIR participating countries following the Adriatic Ionian Council/EUSAIR Ministerial meeting hold a meeting in Belgrade via videoconference and adopt the Belgrade Declaration. The Declaration welcomes both North Macedonia as a new participating country, and the decision of the European Council of 27 March to open accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia. Furthermore, participants commit to jointly respond to the socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis by facilitating the use of the unprecedented amount of funds mobilized to support the most severely affected sectors. The govern-

ment representatives also recognize the important contribution provided by the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative and the EUSAIR to the progressive strengthening of the regional cooperation dimension in sectors of pivotal importance for the region's future.

www.aii-ps.org/news/334-belgrade-declaration-18-june-2020

- 24 August, online: On this date, the Office of the Marche region, as Italian Project Partner of the EUSAIR Facility Point, in cooperation with the Permanent Secretariat of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative organizes the Web-meeting on the protection and promotion of the rights of children in the Adriatic Ionian area. The meeting stresses the importance of raising the level of attention and awareness on the protection of children with a special focus on the most vulnerable, so that safeguarding their interest becomes a pivotal point of every political decision taken at every institutional level. In more concrete terms, participants share the best practices on the protection of children's rights and related European Projects, strengthening the inter-institutional network and the role of National Authorities/Institutions for Children and Adolescents.

www.aii-ps.org/news/338-web-meeting-on-the-protection-and-promotion-of-the-rights-of-children-in-the-adriatic-ionian-area-24-august-2020

- 26-29 August, Ancona, Italy: the 2020 edition of the Adriatic Mediterranean Festival takes place in Ancona, Italy and focuses on the 20th anniversary of the Ancona Charter. The Mediterranean festival constitutes a four-day cultural event that brings together numerous musicians, writers and artists from all over the Adriatic-Ionian region. For the entire duration of the event the rhythms of Mediterranean music, the sounds and scents of the cultures of the Mediterranean sea are interwoven with the central themes of European politics looking south: from human rights, to the role of the Balkans and the Adriatic-Ionian.

www.adriaticomediterraneo.eu/

- 15 September, online: The first All Committee of Senior Officials under Slovenian Chairmanship takes place in Izola, via videoconference, at the beginning of September. Together with the

All Permanent Secretariat Programme of Activities the Priorities and indicative calendar of events of the Slovenian Chairmanship is presented.

www.aii-ps.org/news/342-aii-committee-of-senior-officials-izola-online-15-september-2021

- 24 September, online: the Montenegrin CEI Presidency in cooperation with the CEI-Executive Secretariat, holds the videoconference of the annual meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Central European Initiative (CEI), chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, Mr. Srđan Darmanović. Minister of Foreign Affairs, state secretaries, and high representatives in the CEI Member States participate in the meeting to reiterate CEI's valuable role in fostering constructive political dialogue and project-oriented cooperation among 17 Member States. They also stress the importance of European integration and sustainable development in the region, but also the fundamental role of strong multilateral cooperation in the post-COVID-19 recovery phase.

www.aii-ps.org/news/344-aii-secretary-general-attending-cei-meeting-of-the-ministers-of-foreign-affairs-24-september-2020

- 27 October, online: the EUSAIR Stakeholder Platform, in collaboration with the Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship of the Università Politecnica Delle Marche in collaboration with REDETE (Researching Economic Development and Entrepreneurship in Transition Economies), hosts a workshop on the implementation of the Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) in the Adriatic-Ionian Macro-regional Strategy (EUSAIR). The webinar aims to exchange opinions on how to build synergies and embed cooperation in the overlap between the EUSAIR pillars and the areas of specialization defined within S3. Also, it invites participants to discuss the correct methodology for the design and implementation of S3 in EUSAIR regions and countries and the problems that might arise from its implementation.

www.aii-ps.org/news/346-webinar-smart-specialisation-strategy-s3-in-the-adriatic-ionian-macro-regional-strategy-27-october-2020-online

- 7 November, online: the All Slovenian Chairmanship, together with UNI-ADRION and the All Permanent Secretariat, organizes the All Round Table on Inter-University Cooperation in the Adriatic and Ionian Region. The objective of the round-table is to discuss the present situation and future perspective of Higher Education challenges and responses in COVID-19 time within the Adriatic Ionian Region (AR). In addition, participants will discuss challenges and best practices of Inter-University Cooperation.

www.aii-ps.org/news/347-save-the-date-aii-round-table-on-inter-university-cooperation-november-17-online

- 9 December, online: the All Slovenian Chairmanship, the All Permanent Secretariat and the three Fora of Civil Society (Chambers of Commerce, Cities, and Universities) organize a joint-meeting, in videoconference, to exchange views and experiences on topics and issues of common interest related to the future of regional cooperation in the Adriatic and Ionian Region. The meeting also constitutes an opportunity to deepen the cooperation between the Fora of Civil Society and the current Slovenian Chairmanship of the All. The organization of this meeting demonstrates the growing awareness of the important contribution the civil society is giving to the EUSAIR Strategy process. Indeed the role of the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce, Cities, and Universities have been repeatedly recognized in the Belgrade Declaration and previous ones, contributing to the connection of citizens and civil society to the intergovernmental level.

www.aii-ps.org/news/348-joint-meeting-aii-slovenian-chairmanship-aii-permanent-secretariat-fora-of-civil-society-9-december-2020

5. The Arab League

The League of Arab States (LAS) 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 co-

operation on issues regarding economics, communication, culture, nationality, social welfare and health. The LAS traditionally embodies both the idea of Pan-Arabism (the principle of an Arab homeland) and Arab nationalism (respect of each member state's sovereignty). Among the LAS main achievements, the 1950 Joint Defence and Economic Cooperation Treaty; 1995 Draft 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 Elaraby. The Arab league struggles with dysfunction and disunity among its members. In 2002 it achieved remarkable consensus on the Arab Peace Initiative. The 2011 Arab revolts in the Middle East and North Africa offered an occasion to propose actions and initiatives: it backed the UN action against Gaddafi's forces in Libya and sent, for the first time in history, a mission of observers to Syria (after suspending its membership in the League). Further information:

<http://www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/Pages/default.aspx>

Main events of 2020

- 2 January, Cairo, Egypt: The Executive Office of the Council of Arab Youth and Sports Ministers organizes the 64th session of the International Conference entitled "Youth Initiatives and their Relationship to Defeating Terrorism." Participants discuss many important topics that affect Arab Youth, including the modernization of the Arab Youth Policy and the launch of the "Youth Empowerment" campaign. The meeting also aims

to enhance the role of youth in making initiatives and linking them to information technology to confront intellectual extremism and harness creativity.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2315

- 18 January, Berlin, Germany: Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, the Secretary-General of the Arab League (LAS), heads to the German capital to participate in the summit called by German Chancellor Ms. Angela Merkel on the Libyan crisis. The meeting represents the conclusion of a series of conferences and preparatory stages and aims at reaching a comprehensive political settlement of the Libyan situation and calls on the Libyan parties to agree on the necessary arrangements to achieve the permanent cessation of military operations. Within the meeting framework, the Secretary-General also renews the League's rejection of all forms of foreign military interference in Libyan affairs.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2341

- 15 February, Cairo, Egypt: Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, meets with Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), to discuss several regional and international issues with a particular focus on the Middle East and Mediterranean region. The meeting comes on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, held annually in the German city, and enjoys the participation of many politicians, security officials, and international experts. Also, the Secretary-General of NATO extends an invitation to the Secretary-General of the League to visit the Alliance headquarters in Brussels to discuss supporting channels of consultation and dialogue regarding regional challenges and crises facing the Middle East and the Mediterranean.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2377

- 18 February, Cairo, Egypt: The General Secretariat of the League of the Arab States, Media and Communication Sector participates in the conference organized by the Italian Embassy under the title "Freedom of Worship to Freedom of Religion and Belief" with the participation of a representative of the Al Azhar Foundation and a representative

of the Orthodox Church. Mr. Qais Al Azzawi, the Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the Media and Communications sector at the Arab League, underlines the interest of the Arab League in issuing dialogues among civilizations, cultures and religions. Within the framework of the meeting, he focuses on building a constructive dialogue to consolidate a culture of brotherhood and achieve peaceful cooperation between peoples. Furthermore, he affirms the urgent need to establish a system of global values based on cultural and religious pluralism. Also, he praises the efforts of various countries and international and regional organizations that work to spread a culture of peace and tolerance among peoples and nations.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2385

- 4 March, Cairo, Egypt: The meeting of the Council of the League of Arab States in its 153rd regular session at the ministerial level is held where they discuss, among other topics: the follow-up of the political developments of the Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict; the security of navigation and energy supplies in the Arab Gulf region; support for peace and development in the Republic of Sudan, Federal Republic of Somalia, and United Republic of Comoros; Arab water security; in addition to the following up on developments in the situation in Syria, Libya and Yemen. The council also discusses the Arab national security and international peace, the support for internally displaced people in Arab countries and topics related to Arab relations with international and regional groupings.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2400

- 5 March, Cairo, Egypt: Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, receives Mr. Christian Saunders, the Acting Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA). The Secretary-General of the League of Arab States expresses concerns over the financial situation of UNRWA. Participants then exchange ideas on how to bridge the budget deficit UNRWA faces, which negatively affects the organization's operations in education, health

and other sectors, and reflects directly on the Palestinian refugee communities. Finally, Mr. Aboul Gheit emphasizes the important role UNRAWA plays in supporting stability in the Middle East region, thanking the donor countries – Arab and non-Arab – for their generous contribution.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2401

- 15 April, Cairo, Egypt: Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the LAS, listens to the assessments of the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria on the security situation in Syria, stressing the importance of consolidating the current armistice that was reached between the Turkish and Russian sides, maintaining the ceasefire and calming the military situation. Within the meeting, the parties also discuss the ongoing health situation and the dangerous social and economic consequences of the possible spread of the COVID-19 pandemic across the most vulnerable areas and among refugees and displaced persons.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2424

- 5 May, Cairo, Egypt: The General-Secretariat of the League of Arab States (Social Sector) issues a report titled “The current situation and post-Coronavirus vision and health and social repercussions of the Coronavirus (COVID-19).” Mr. Haifa Abu-Ghazaleh, Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the Social Affairs Sector, states that the report includes, in addition to analysing health, social and development implications of the COVID-19 pandemic in Arab countries, a brief presentation of the efforts of Arab countries to contain the pandemic. Furthermore, the report provides a series of short and long-term recommendations in support of the decision-maker to develop the necessary policies to deal with the consequences of the sanitary crisis and mitigate its economic and social repercussions.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2441

- 14 May, online: The General Secretariat of the League of Arab States participates, via video conference, in the International Follow-up Committee on Libya, at the Berlin International Conference. The meeting, chaired by Italy and jointly

organized with the United Nations support missions to Libya, sees the participation of 18 delegations from countries and regional and international organizations. Within the meeting, emphasis is placed on the revision and evaluation of the latest political and military developments in Libya and proposing possible ways to solve the conflict. In his intervention, Ambassador Hossam Zaki presents the Arab position concerning the situation in Libya. He stresses that the priority from the Arab League’s point of view, in light of the current situation, should be reaching a ceasefire and cooperating to support the initiation of a high-level political dialogue with the actors involved in the Libyan transition process

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2449

- 17 June, online: The Department of Women, Family, and Childhood (Social Affairs Sector) organizes the 39th session of the Ministerial Meeting Arab’s Women’s Committee, headed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and hosted online, on “Examining the effects of the Covid-19 virus on women and girls.” The events constitute an opportunity to exchange the best experiences among member states on several issues affecting women’s lives.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2467

- 22 June, online: The 3rd meeting of the International Follow-up Committee on Libya (IFCL) at the Senior Officials level is co-chaired by the League of Arab States, represented by Assistant Secretary-General Hossam Zaki, and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), represented by Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General Stephanie Williams. The meeting follows from the last meeting of the IFCL, which was held on 13 May 2020 and co-hosted by Italy and UNSMIL. Within this framework, participants recall the importance of addressing, within the 5 + 5 JMC negotiations, comprehensive provisions regarding the repatriation of all foreign mercenaries; the multiple violations of the UN arms embargo; the various attempts to resume an inclusive political process and completing Libya’s transition. Participants also welcome the progress achieved so far by the four thematic technical working groups of the

IFCL, addressing security, political, economic and international humanitarian law and human rights issues, in following up and operationalizing the conclusions of the Berlin Conference. They also stress the IFCL’s efforts to support a durable and peaceful Libyan-led resolution of the conflict, under UN auspices.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2476

- 27 July, online: The United Nations Development Programme UNDP, the Government of Japan, and the League of Arab States hold a round table on the impacts of COVID-19 in the Arab region. The main participants meet with other relevant United Nations agencies to assess the repercussions of the pandemic and discuss the need for coordination and cooperation to prevent further crises. The meeting also contributes to strengthening joint efforts to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on development and identify potential opportunities to move towards more inclusive and sustainable development, supporting the most vulnerable.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2520

- 30 August, Cairo, Egypt: The Secretary-General of the League of Arab States meets with Stephanie Williams, acting Head of the United Nations Support Mission, to discuss the overall developments in the Libyan arena and possible ways to push the efforts to settle the Libyan crisis on its military, political and economic tracks. Participants reaffirm the significance of previous declarations and stress the importance of installing the ceasefire, resuming the production and export of oil and reestablishing political dialogue to establish a political dialogue under the auspices of the United Nations. The Secretary-General emphasizes that all these efforts cannot succeed unless all foreign military intervention in the Libyan territory stop, including mercenaries and foreign forces.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2550

- 3 September, Egypt, Cairo: The Aboul Gheit, the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, receives the High Representative for European Foreign Policy, Joseph Borrell, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat

of the League. The two sides exchange views on the current developments in the MENA region and prospects for cooperation between the two parties at various levels. Participants discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts and highlight the importance of joint Arab-European work to consolidate consensus on the determinants of a peaceful settlement within the two-state solution framework. They also discuss Libya's situation and stresses the importance of maintaining the current calm and establishing a ceasefire on the ground between the forces of the Government of National Accord and the Libyan National Army, and encourage the Libyan parties resume inclusive political dialogue.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2557

- 30 September, online: The General Secretariat of the Arab League (Human Rights Administration), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa), together with the participation of representatives of stakeholders in 17 Arab countries, as well as the Arab Human Rights Commissions, take part in a specialized digital communication technology symposium on the "Impact of COVID-19 on human trafficking." The event is part of the Arab League-level efforts to identify the economic and social repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants emphasize the need to strengthen capacity-building programmes that tackle the crime of human sale and trafficking in women and children, as they were strongly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Member state representatives share views, concerns, and proposals on how to pre-empt the activities of organized crime networks dealing with human trafficking.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2593

- 8 October, Juba, Sudan: The Arab League signs as a witness, the Juba Agreement for Peace in Sudan. The ceremony occurs in Juba, in the presence of General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, the first vice president of the Sudanese Transitional Sovereignty Council, leaders of Sudanese armed movements, and senior officials of the Government of South Sudan. The

agreement is highly complex and covers various areas, including governance, security and transitional justice. Nevertheless, it constitutes a milestone in the country's history as it is intended to inform the future constitutional negotiation process.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2601

- 14 October, Cairo, Egypt: The Arab League Secretary General receives the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Mr. Nikolai Udinov to discuss the latest developments of the Palestinian situation, from a political, security and economic point of view. The Arab League Secretary-general expresses Arab points of view on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and reiterates the idea that the stability of the region is directly related to reaching a political settlement based on the two-state solution, which, from an Arab perspective, remains the only internationally acceptable solution. Furthermore, the UN Special Coordination for the Middle East Peace Process presents the economic and social challenges faced by the Palestinian region, especially with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2608

- 17 October, Cairo, Egypt: Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the Arab League, receives the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain, Arancha González Laya, at the Headquarters of the General Secretariat of the Arab League. Participants discuss several topics of common interest, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and ways to improve the relationship between the Arab League and Spain in several areas, such as the politics, economics and cultural ones.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2610

- 23 November, online: Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, the Secretary-General of the Arab League (LAS), participates in a meeting organized by the UN Secretary-General Antonio Gutierrez with more than 20 regional organizations from the Arab, African, Asian, European and American region. The conference aims to discuss the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on international peace and security and find new ways

to maximize cooperation between the United Nations and the regional organizations to address global cross-border challenges.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2660

- 2 December, online: The Secretary-General of the Arab League takes part in the international meeting, held under the joint auspices of the United Nations and France, in support of the Lebanese people. The Secretary-General of the Arab League makes a speech where he stresses the contributions made so far by the Joint Arab Action System to support the Lebanese people in the wake of the Beirut port bombing in August, including, for example, the contribution of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development. Also, Mr. Aboul Gheit indicates the importance of giving Lebanon global support in these difficult circumstances, stressing the need for Lebanon to form, as soon as possible, a new government to carry out the necessary reforms to deal with the severe crisis the country faces.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2679

- 10 December, online: The League of Arab States (LAS), the Government of Japan, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) convene a senior-policy roundtable under the theme of "Towards Recovery from COVID-19: Challenges and Opportunities for the Arab Region." The roundtable brings together experts and stakeholders from across the region to discuss recovery policies and explore pathways to work towards a sustainable future. Experts from the UNDP and the Arab region assess and present policy responses to address the impact on vulnerable businesses and groups in the discussion, confirming the importance of turning the crisis into an opportunity to strengthening regional and international cooperation as a fundamental step to moving forward and accelerating efforts towards achieving the SDGs.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2706

- 28 December: The General Secretariat of the Arab League welcomes the appointment of Norwegian diplomat Mr. Tor Wennesland as the UN Special

Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority. Mr. Wennesland succeeds Nickolay Mladenov of Bulgaria and, according to his new role, Mr. Wennesland will be the Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Quartet. The Secretary-General congratulates the new envoy and expresses his readiness to collaborate in order to restore peace in the region.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2706

6. Summit of the Southern European Union Countries

The 1st Mediterranean EU Countries' Summit took place in September 2016 in Malta to enhance their cooperation and contribute to the dialogue on the future of the EU. The recovery from the crisis, high migration flows, instability in the southern Mediterranean, Brexit, and Euro-scepticism need a united response from south European countries. With the Athens Declaration, the Heads of State and Government (HoSG) of the Republic of Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain underline their strong commitment to European unity. They are convinced that the EU needs fresh energy to address the common challenges the Member States are facing and uphold its values of freedom, de-

mocracy and rule of law, and tolerance and solidarity. The countries, therefore, propose the following priorities and measures: ensuring the internal and external security of Europe, reinforcing cooperation in the Mediterranean and with African countries, fostering growth and investment in Europe, strengthening programmes for youth, and addressing the challenge of migration. Athens Declaration 2016.

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

▪ 4 June, online: The ministers in charge of European Affairs of Greece, Cyprus, France, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain, meet by videoconference to join efforts in ensuring Europe can withstand the sanitary and economic crisis and come out of it united and stronger. They discuss several topics, including the plan for Europe's economic recovery, based on solidarity; the Future of Europe and the strategic importance of the Southern Neighbourhood; the lessons to be learned from the severe sanitary crisis; the management of migratory flows; the Commission's proposal of a new European pact on migration and asylum; the latest developments in the eastern Mediterranean and the reiteration of the European Council Conclusions of December 2019 and, finally, the Statement of EU Foreign Ministers of 15 May 2020. The videoconference also prepares the MED 7 Summit Meeting, which is to be held in Ajaccio, France, in the near future.

www.exteriores.gob.es/Portal/es/SalaDePrensa/NotasDePrensa/Documents/MED7%20meeting_joint%20statement.pdf

▪ 10 September, Ajaccio, France: The declaration issued after the 7th Summit of the Southern EU Countries highlights the strategic importance of the Southern Neighbourhood for Europe. The participants to the Med 7 propose giving new strength to a holistic European policy in the Mediterranean, intending to enhance the European Union capacity and its Member States to face collectively and efficiently the regions' challenges. Overall, the declaration issued after the 7th summit tackles several issues: peace and stability in the Mediterranean, with particular attention given to the relationship of the EU with Turkey and security issues in Greece and Cyprus; the volatile situation in Libya, on which the stability of the country itself but also the entire region depends; ongoing Syrian instability and the Syrian refugees crisis; Beirut's explosion on 4 August and Lebanon's economic adjustment; Middle-East Peace Process; the European agenda: the Next Generation EU and its implementation; and the new European Pact on Migration and Asylum to be presented by the Commission.

www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/europe/news/article/ajaccio-declaration-after-the-7th-summit-of-the-southern-eu-countries-med7-10