

Other Cooperation Initiatives in the Mediterranean

1. NATO Mediterranean Dialogue + 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 complementary 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 (including cyber defence, military exercises, Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices cooperation and 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 SPS Programme is a policy tool that enhances cooperation and dialogue with all part-

ners, 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 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 2021

- *14 January, Brussels:* President of Mauritania, Mohamed Ould Ghazouani, visits the NATO headquarters in Brussels and discusses security cooperation with NATO SG Jens Stoltenberg. Stoltenberg highlighted Mauritania's contributions to regional security in the Sahel, especially with regards to counterterrorism. Mauritania has been a NATO partner country since 1995, and the Alliance has supported Mauritania in strengthening its capabilities through actions such as constructing munitions depots, or training military personnel. www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_180670.htm?selectedLocale=en
- *22 January, Brussels:* NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg meets with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu in Brussels, to discuss issues including the military de-confliction mechanism in the Eastern Mediterranean between Greece and Turkey, as well as Afghanistan and Libya. The Secretary General expresses his concern on the situation in Libya and re-emphasises NATO's position of providing defence, security and institution building advice. www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_180795.htm
- *22 February, Brussels:* Tunisia receives 100,000 FFP2 masks from the Pandemic Response Trust Fund, coordinated by NATO's Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC), which included financial contributions from Belgium, Germany and Norway. Tunisia is the first NATO partner in the Middle East and North Africa region to receive such support to address worsening Covid-19 conditions. www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_181776.htm?selectedLocale=en

- *11 March, Brussels:* Iraqi Foreign Minister Faud Hussein holds a virtual briefing with NATO, focussing on NATO-Iraq cooperation. NATO SG emphasized NATO's role in strengthening the security institutions and forces of Iraq, in order to aid the stabilization of the country, as well as prevent the return of ISIS. NATO's Mission in Iraq is a non-combat mission which carries out advising, training and capacity-building activities. NATO allies also congratulate Iraqi representatives on the recent visit of Pope Francis. www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_182050.htm?selectedLocale=en
- *30 March, Brussels:* NATO SG Jens Stoltenberg takes part in a virtual meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, co-hosted by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sophie Wilmes. The SG discusses NATO's non-combat mission in Iraq, and the recent joint decision between NATO and Iraq to expand this mission. Mr Stoltenberg also emphasizes that NATO will continue to consult with key partners including the UN and the EU as it continues to coordinate with the Global Coalition going forward. www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_182894.htm?selectedLocale=en
- *5 May, Brussels:* King Abdullah II of Jordan visits NATO in Brussels. NATO SG Jens Stoltenberg emphasized NATO's close partnership with Jordan, stating that Jordanian and NATO forces have served together in the Balkans, Afghanistan and over Libya. He also stated that NATO is stepping up its delivery of PPE and other medical equipment to further support Jordan's fight against Covid-19. www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_183404.htm?selectedLocale=en
- *17 May, Brussels:* The first scientific cooperation activity between NATO and Algeria concludes, with the aim of developing technological solutions relevant to the fight against terrorism. In the context of the NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme (SPS), experts from Algeria, France and Sweden taking part develop the first terahertz imaging

technology in North Africa. This is a scanning system enabling the detection of firearms and explosives, providing the potential for protecting vulnerable sites from terrorist threats.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_183762.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ *8 June, Baghdad:* Poland delivers medical equipment and supplies to Iraq in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This support is coordinated by NATO's EADRCC and the Polish government and armed forces. The supplies, which include facemasks and protective gloves and suits, are distributed by the Polish embassy in Baghdad. This support is part of the wider set of assistance measures Allies have taken towards Iraq in order to mitigate the most severe effects of Covid-19. NATO's Pandemic Response Trust Fund is also supporting the delivery of other medical equipment to Iraq, including an oxygen generator.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_184883.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ *11 June, Amman:* NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoană inaugurates a new Military Women's Training Centre in Jordan. The centre has been operational since November 2020, and it supports Jordan's aim of attaining 3% female representation in its armed forces. It provides NATO-standard basic and leadership training to nearly 600 students per year, and it includes living quarters and a nursery. Norway and the Czech Republic are lead nations of this project, while other Allies and Partner nations helped finance it through NATO's Trust Fund II for Jordan.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_184889.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ *14 June, Brussels:* The 2021 NATO Summit takes place, gathering the leaders of NATO's 30 member countries. As part of the final communiqué, Alliance leaders commit to enhancing engagement in the Middle East and North Africa region, and to strengthen dialogue and "practical cooperation" with Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative Partners. The Communiqué highlights examples of actions made towards these commitments, including upgrading defence capacity building assistance in Jordan and Tunisia, or leveraging the NATO-ICI Regional Centre in

Kuwait as a hub for education, training, and public diplomacy activities.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ *25 June, Brussels:* NATO civil and military officials complete a trip to Mauritania, where they discuss opportunities for potential additional training and capacity building activities in support of Mauritanian national defence and security structures and institutions. NATO officials meet with the Mauritanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Chief of Defence, and several other high level officials. NATO and Mauritania are seeking to develop and strengthen their partnership; Allied leaders pointed out at this year's NATO summit that Mauritania plays a key role in NATO's collective security interests in the Sahel region.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185516.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ *30 June, Brussels:* Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi of Iraq visits NATO in Brussels. Accompanied by Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein, and Defence Minister Jumaah Saadoon, the Prime Minister discussed progress being made by the NATO mission in Iraq with SG Jens Stoltenberg. NATO's non-combat mission in Iraq trains and advises Iraqi security institutions and forces, helping them to fight terrorism and stabilize the country.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185613.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ *12 July, Brussels,* H.E. Yair Lapid, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Alternate Prime Minister of Israel, visits NATO headquarters in Brussels and discusses a range of issues related to NATO-Israel relations with Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. The Secretary General pointed out Israel's continued contact with NATO, including staff-to-staff and expert level exchanges, despite restrictions imposed by Covid-19, in recent months. Israel is an active member of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue, and cooperates with NATO in areas including science and technology, crisis preparedness, resilience and counter-terrorism.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185780.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ *12 July, Brussels:* NATO SG Jens Stoltenberg meets Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry at NATO's headquarters. During their meeting, the

Secretary General welcomes the renewal of the Individual Partnership Cooperation Programme, and discusses the regional developments affecting Egypt's security interests with Minister Sameh Shoukry. Egypt's relationship with NATO, through the Mediterranean Dialogue, spans over more than 25 years.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185779.htm?selectedLocale=en

▪ *15 December, Tunis:* Tunisia receives 10 ventilators from NATO's Pandemic Response Stockpile to assist the country with responding to Covid-19 infections. The donation is made by Hungary and coordinated by NATO's Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre, and is aimed at benefiting the military hospitals of Bizerte Gabes and Sfax. NATO's Pandemic Response Trust Fund, and Pandemic Stockpile, have provided several tranches of Covid-19 support to allies and partners, including in the Mediterranean.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_190271.htm?selectedLocale=en

2. OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation

The relationship between the OSCE and its MPCs dates back to the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, which recognized that security in Europe is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean as a whole. Immediately after Helsinki, Mediterranean non-participating states were invited to a specific meeting on Mediterranean issues related to economic, social, environmental, scientific and cultural topics. It was at the 1993 Rome Ministerial Council meeting when Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Morocco and Tunisia requested a closer cooperation and finally became partners for cooperation in 1995 (Jordan joined in 1998). In 1994 an informal contact group of experts met to conduct a dialogue with MPCs to facilitate the exchange of information of mutual interest and generate ideas: the Mediterranean Contact Group (MCG). Within the political framework of this relationship, besides the MCG, the main elements are: the annual OSCE Mediterranean Conference, certain annual OSCE events, the OSCE PA Mediter-

anean Forum and the visit by the Secretary General (SG). The OSCE Mediterranean Conference is generally attended by international organizations, parliamentarians, academics and NGOs, and it provides a place for the exchange of ideas and exploring new ways to enhance cooperation. At the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting, partners engage in high-level meetings with the OSCE Troika (incoming, current and past Chairmen-in-Office) and the OSCE SG. In 2003, OSCE participating states decided to extend the fields for cooperation with partners (counterterrorism, border issues, economic and environmental activities, trafficking in human beings, election observation, media freedom) besides encouraging them to voluntarily implement OSCE commitments. Since 2007, a special fund has been created to attend to Partners' needs to participate in specific activities. The wave of upheavals that swept across the southern Mediterranean as of 2011 confirmed the need to reinforce and adapt the Partnership to assist Partners on their way to democracy and stability. The Contact Group serves at the main venue for regular dialogue with the Partners. It generally meets seven times a year at ambassadorial level and its chairman is generally the incoming chair of the OSCE. It discusses topics relevant to OSCE Partners or members in the three OSCE dimensions: politico-military, economic and environmental and human. Since 2011, Partners have displayed a readiness to share relevant information and developments within the group while OSCE participating states have reaffirmed their support to share their expertise, experience and OSCE toolbox for democratic transition. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) enhances relations between participating states and MPCs from a parliamentary perspective. MPCs are invited to participate in OSCE PA conferences, and also to country observation missions offering them the opportunity to study best practices and democratic processes.

Main Events in 2021

- *16 March, Vienna:* The first OSCE Mediterranean Partnership of Cooperation group meeting of the Polish Chair-

manship takes place, with a focus on post-Covid-19 recovery, as well as current challenges and opportunities for security and regional cooperation. Ambassador Adam Hałaciński, Permanent Representative of Poland to the OSCE, and Marcin Przydacz, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, emphasize Poland's commitment towards continued cooperation between the OSCE and its Mediterranean partners.

www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/481282

- *10 May, Vienna:* The OSCE holds a Mediterranean Partnership of Cooperation group meeting in Vienna on the theme of transnational organized crime (TOC), gathering over 150 representatives from OSCE and partner countries including Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. Participants stress the importance of doubling down prevention efforts and leveraging multilateral platforms and regional platforms to bolster the fight against TOC. One of the key issues explored was how the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners could more concretely reflect implementing international provisions and conventions that facilitate transnational co-operation in their national strategies, such as the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC) and the Doha Declaration.

www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/486035

- *13 July, Vienna:* The third meeting of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation group chaired by Poland takes place, with the theme of realizing the potential of young people towards ensuring economic success and enhancing stability in the Mediterranean region. Participants discuss current youth unemployment trends, as well as good practices for tapping into the potential of young people.

www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/492724

- *15 July, Vienna:* Representatives from the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation hold a meeting discussing the possibilities for broadening dialogue to include sustainable development and climate change. As highlighted by recent studies, the Mediterranean region is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change,

most notably rising temperatures and water scarcity. In combination with other factors such as inequality and resource constraints, as well as migration flows, these climate factors are likely to affect the region's security. The Partners for Cooperation shared their commitments, best practices and ways forward related to sustainable development and climate change, stressing the importance of a collective approach and the importance of dialogue.

www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/492958

- *12 October, Vienna:* The 2021 OSCE Mediterranean Partners Conference takes place in Vienna, in order to outline a "road to resilience" for recovery from Covid-19. The conference focusses on three areas in which the OSCE can add value to Mediterranean cooperation; the sustainable and green recovery, fighting pandemic-related organized crime, and combating human trafficking in labour markets affected by the pandemic.

www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/500677

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 2021

- *29 April, Online:* In the context of the Spanish co-presidency of the 5+5 Dialogue in 2021, the MedThink 5+5 network organizes an online conference titled "Fostering Women's Economic Participation in the Western Mediterranean: Successful Policies for in-depth Transformations." The conference maps gender economic disparities in Western Mediterranean societies, mainly in the Maghreb, and highlights national initiatives already impacting the economy and public policies. The dialogue leads to policy recommendations aimed at paving the way for in-depth economic and social transformation.

<https://medthink5plus5.org/en/2021/04/29/new-medthink-5-5-online-conference-fostering-womens-economic-participation/>

- *5 October, Online:* In the framework of the Medthink 5+5 network, the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed) and the Centre for Transportation Studies for the Western Mediterranean (CETMO) host a thematic seminar titled "The Western Mediterranean Transport and Logistics Sector in the post-Covid-19 Era: Seizing New Opportunities, Accelerating Transitions." The seminar is held on the occasion of the 10th Conference of Ministers of Transport of the 5+5 Dialogue in Malta, and it aims to stimulate debate for the sector to better prepare and adapt itself to the post-Covid-19 era, while promoting western Mediterranean integration and co-development.

<https://medthink5plus5.org/en/2021/10/05/thematic-webinar-transport-and-logistics/>

- *6 October, Malta, Online:* The 10th meeting of the Group of Transport Ministers of the Western Mediterranean

(GTMO) takes place, in the context of the 5+5 Dialogue, with the title "Enhancing connectivity with GTMO African countries within the European framework." The discussion of the ministers focussed on how to enhance the connectivity and sustainability of the transport sector in the western Mediterranean.

<https://medthink5plus5.org/en/2021/10/06/10th-meeting-of-the-group-of-transport-ministers-of-the-countries-of-the-western-mediterranean-gtmo-55/>

- *7 October, Alicante:* The 1st meeting of labour ministers of the 5+5 dialogue takes place in Alicante, with the aim of opening up a new field of sectorial cooperation within the Western Mediterranean Forum. The meeting emphasizes the importance of initiating labour cooperation within the 5 + 5 Dialogue in the context of the fractures caused by the Covid-19 crisis. It also focuses on exchanging good practices to promote decent job creation in accordance with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

<https://medthink5plus5.org/en/2021/10/07/1st-meeting-of-labour-ministers-of-the-5-5-dialogue-in-alicante/>

- *13-14 October, Madrid:* The 5th MedThink 5+5 Forum is held, bringing together over 35 diplomats and experts from think tanks of the member states of the 5+5 Dialogue, with the aim of discussing current transformations in the western Mediterranean, in the context of the region's post-Covid-19 recovery. The forum is jointly organized by the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

<https://medthink5plus5.org/en/2021/10/14/what-prospects-for-the-55-dialogue-in-a-mediterranean-in-transformation/>

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 Sum-

mit in 1999, the Italian Government presented the "Adriatic Ionian Initiative." The Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (All) was established at the Summit on the Development and Security of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, held in Ancona (Italy) in May 2000. At the end of the Conference, the Foreign Ministers of the participating countries, Italy, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece and Slovenia signed the "Ancona Declaration" in order to strengthen regional cooperation to promote political and economic stability, thus creating a solid base for the process of European integration. Today, the All has eight members: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. The initiative's Chairmanship rotates every May/June according to alphabetical criteria. The Chairmanship of Greece started in June 2016 and ended in May 2017, with Italy taking over from June 2017 until May 2018. Following the recent EU approach to support multilateral subregional 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 was 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 aims 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 Slovenian Chairmanship

Slovenia formally takes over the one-year chairmanship of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (All) and the EU Strategy of the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) on 1 June 2020, and holds 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 key 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 Chairman-

ship, 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

- *27-29 January, Belgrade, Online:* The 5th Forum of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) takes place under the slogan "Strengthening the resilience of the Adriatic and Ionian Region through cooperation." The Forum brings together Ministers in charge of Foreign Affairs and European Funds, officials of the European Commission, relevant stakeholders and the general public to take part in discussing the future of the Strategy and its role in addressing the key issues in the region.

www.aii-ps.org/news/354

- *11 February, Online:* The second Adriatic Ionian Initiative (All) Committee of Senior Officials under the Slovenian Chairmanship takes place online, back-to-back with the first session of the 14th EUSAIR Governing Board. Topics discussed include: the next Adriatic and Ionian Council/EUSAIR Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting, the Exclusive Economic Zone in the Adriatic Sea, and the implementation of the project "Active Young Citizens for Sustainable Development in CEI and All areas."

www.aii-ps.org/news/355

- *25 March, Online:* The All Trio meeting, which consists of a meeting between representatives of past, present and future All Chairmanships (Serbia, Slovenia, Albania), takes place online. Topics discussed include youth and relations with regional actors. The aim of the Trio Meeting is to ensure a smooth transition and continuity between Chairmanships.

www.aii-ps.org/news/358

- *15 April, Online:* The 17th Conference of Presidents of Parliaments of the All takes place, bringing together delegations of the parliaments of the countries participating in the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative. Participants discuss the digital transition, its opportunities and its challenges for young people entering the labour market. They also discuss the issue of youth and employment more generally, touching on the possibilities of job creation and better conditions in the Adriatic and Ionian Region.

www.aii-ps.org/news/359

- *26 April, Online:* Adriatic Ionian Initiative Secretary General, Ambassador Giovanni Castellaneta, takes part in a parliamentary workshop organized by the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs of the Italian Chamber of Deputies (Lower House of the Italian Parliament), titled "Western Balkans: between multipolarism and the European integration process." During his intervention, the All Secretary General stresses that the future of the Western Balkans is in Europe, and that Member States need to step up the integration process.

www.aii-ps.org/news/361

- *11-12 May, Izola (Slovenia), Online:* The 6th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), organized by the Republic of Slovenia and the European Commission, is held. The forum concludes with the publication of the Izola Declaration, laying out the priorities of participating countries. Topics of focus in the forum and of the declaration are Green Connectivity, the continuation of the European integration process of the Western Balkans, and the ongoing Covid-19 related challenges.

www.aii-ps.org/news/363

Main Events during the Albanian Chairmanship

Albania officially assumes the one-year chairmanship of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (All), of which it is a founding member, and of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) on 1 June 2021, after the 21st anniversary of the Ancona Declaration of May 2000. The country is due to hold the position until the end of May 2022. In line with Albanian foreign policy, which has prioritized regional cooperation and integration in its diplomacy, Albania's incentives and actions are aimed at deepening the cooperation within the All/EUSAIR community to find joint solutions and to adequately address the economic and social consequences of the pandemic, facilitating and supporting a sustainable recovery. The activities planned during the one-year presidency focus on four keys priorities: 1: Youth; tackling issues such as brain drain and labour migration in the Western Balkans, and recognizing that youth is a key driver of regional cooperation and peacebuilding. Tirana is

also set to be the European Youth Capital for 2022. 2: European Integration and Green Agenda; supporting Western Balkan countries in their path towards EU integration, and deepening efforts towards promoting innovative maritime and marine growth in the AI region. 3: Tourism and Culture; promoting the AI region as a major tourist destination. 4: Connectivity and digitalization; promoting further digital transformation, building on the achievements of the Digital Agenda.

▪ *23 June, Online:* The Secretary General of the Adriatic Ionian Initiative (All) attends the annual meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the member states of the Central European Initiative (CEI), held under the Montenegrin CEI Presidency. The meeting tackles the topic of "Shaping Europe's Future, Building Prosperous Region: Enlargement, Rapprochement, Recovery." Key issues addressed are regional cooperation as a tool in fighting Covid-19, EU integration of the Western Balkans, and relations with Eastern Partnership countries.

www.aii-ps.org/news/365-aii-secretary-general-attending-cei-meeting-of-ministers-of-foreign-affairs-23-june-2021

▪ *6 July, Online:* A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is signed between the All and Marche Polytechnic University in Italy in order to strengthen collaboration and develop new scientific teaching activities on issues related to European integration. The MoU foresees the creation of 10 two-year scholarships, which will be granted to students coming from the Adriatic-Ionian region and the Western Balkans for enrolment in one of the four master's degree courses taught in English at the Marche Polytechnic University (International Economics and Commerce, Biomedical Engineering, Environmental Engineering and Food and Beverage Innovation and Management). The All will also finance a university course on European integration.

www.aii-ps.org/news/367

▪ *18-22 August, Ancona:* The 15th edition of the "Adriatico Mediterraneo" Festival is held, celebrating relations between Albania and Italy. The festival includes the granting of the Adriatico Mediterraneo prize, to academics, experts and authors who write on issues

relating to Albanian-Italian relations, and other activities including seminars and discussions on topics such as Albania and European Integration.

www.aii-ps.org/news/368

▪ *11-14 October, Brussels, Online:* The European Week of Regions and Cities (#EURegionsWeek), the biggest annual Brussels-based event dedicated to cohesion policy, takes place online. The agenda features over 300 sessions and online networking activities on four main themes; cohesion, green transition, digital transition, and citizen's engagement. The programme is focused on the capacity of the EU, as well as national and regional governments, to support citizens and their local communities with policies aimed at investing in a fairer, greener and more digital future for recovery.

www.aii-ps.org/news/369

▪ *19 October, Online:* The first Adriatic Ionian Initiative (All) Committee of Senior Officials meeting under the Albanian chairmanship takes place. The meeting discusses the four key priorities of the Albanian chairmanship (youth, European integration and the green agenda, tourism and culture, connectivity and the digital transition). Senior officials are also briefed on recent activities of the All, including the agreement to fund scholarships for students from the Adriatic-Ionian region and Western Balkans enrolling in master's degrees at Marche Polytechnic University.

www.aii-ps.org/news/373-aii-committee-of-senior-official-tirana-online-18-october-2021

▪ *22-26 November, Rome:* Adriatic Ionian Initiative (All) Secretary General Ambassador Castellaneta attends the EU-Balkan youth forum, which gathers European youth to discuss common issues, talk with policymakers, and encourage the emergence of a young transnational network to design new initiatives as well as foster fresh views on both the future of the EU and Balkan integration. Secretary General Castellaneta attends a session on EU enlargement, where he emphasizes the role of the All and EUSAIR as tools towards promoting development of the Western Balkans and thus accelerating the enlargement process.

www.aii-ps.org/news/375-eu-balkan-forum

5. League of Arab States

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 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 for 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 About 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 in 2021

▪ *1 February, Cairo:* Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed About Gheit holds a meeting of general cooperation

between the Arab League and the African Union, with Moussa Faki, Chairman of the African Union Commission. This meeting is held periodically and in alternation between Cairo and Addis Ababa. The talks deal with issues of common interest between the two organizations, such as implementing the ceasefire in Libya, or supporting the political transition in Sudan.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2731

- *3 February, Cairo:* Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit receives Lebanese Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri, in the context of his visit to Cairo. Discussions between the two leaders revolved mainly about the Lebanese situation, including the latest developments in the formation of the government, and on the country's hopes to resolve its economic and social crisis. Secretary General Aboul Gheit expresses the Arab League's continued support for Lebanon as it confronts these challenges.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2737

- *8 March, Cairo:* On the occasion of his visit to Cairo, Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikos Dendias visits Cairo and is received by Arab League Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit. Topics of discussion include how to advance relations between Greece and the Arab League by supporting efforts for security, stability, development and settling crises in the Arab Region.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2795

- *24 March, Online:* The General Secretariat of the Arab League and the European External Action Service hold a workshop on the EU's New Agenda for the Mediterranean. Participants from the Secretariat of the Arab League are given a summary of the New Agenda, and take part in a discussion on how it can benefit Arab League states at a regional and national level.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2820

- *25 March, Cairo:* The 3rd Arab Women Forum takes place under the theme of "Women, Digital Transformation and Financial Inclusion". The forum is organized in close collaboration between the General Secretariat of the Arab League

and civil society organizations, and brings together regional and national CSOs and actors, as well as leaders and experts across Arab League states in a series of debates and discussions.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2819

- *30 March, Brussels, Online:* Representatives of the Arab League participate in the 5th Brussels Conference on "Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region." chaired by the European Union and the United Nations. The conference deals with how the international community can mobilize its support and continue to provide humanitarian aid to Syrians inside and outside Syria, including by supporting Syrian refugees and displaced persons. In his intervention, Arab League Assistant Secretary-General Ambassador Hossam Zaki, stresses the scale of human suffering inflicted on Syrians by the ongoing war in the last decade, emphasizes the Arab League's concern, and renews the Arab League's call for further international action in support of ending the conflict.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2827

- *14 April, Cairo:* Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit receives Jan Kubis, United Nations special envoy to Libya, during his visit to Cairo. Aboul Gheit and Kubis discuss the role of the Arab League and the United Nations in supporting the settlement process in Libya. Aboul Gheit also stresses the Arab League's eagerness to strengthen its cooperation with the United Nations in this regard.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2854

- *4 May, Tunis:* Tunisian President Kaïs Saïed hosts Arab League Secretary General Aboul Gheit in Tunis. The leaders discuss regional issues of common interest and various crises, including the situations in Libya and Palestine, where they both express their agreement on the need to restore stability throughout the Arab region, as well as the importance of the role of the Arab League in this respect.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2837

- *13 June, Cairo:* The Arab League issues a statement condemning the European Parliament's resolution criticising the alleged breach of the UN Con-

vention on the Rights of the Child by Moroccan authorities in the migratory crisis in Ceuta. The statement emphasizes the complex nature of migration issues, as well as the need for cooperation between the EU and Morocco. It concludes by calling on the EU to adopt a practical position to enhance cooperation and coordination with Morocco with respect to migration.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2938

- *20 June, Cairo:* Secretary General Aboul Gheit receives Sven Koopmans, the new European Union envoy to the Middle East. The pair discuss issues relating to the EU's position vis à vis the Israel-Palestine conflict, and Aboul Gheit stresses the need to mobilize the international community to encourage both parties to sit at the negotiating table.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2956

- *28 June, Rome:* Secretary General of the Arab League Aboul Gheit participates in the conference of the international coalition against ISIS in Rome, attended by over 40 foreign ministers and heads of international organizations. In his intervention, Aboul Gheit emphasizes that the fight against ISIS as an organization must be in lockstep with the fight against ISIS as an ideology, stressing that the unity of international action is the key to eliminating ISIS.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2967

- *15-16 July, New York:* Arab League Secretary General Aboul Gheit attends the United Nations Security Council in New York, where he has various meetings with rulers, ministers and officials. Among them is United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres, with whom Aboul Gheit discusses matters of common interest and cooperation including on the Libyan political dialogue, the Palestinian issue, the situation in Lebanon and the Iranian elections. In addition, Aboul Gheit meets with the Prime Minister of the Libyan National Unity Government, Abdel Hamid Debayyeh, with whom he discusses relations between Libya and the Arab League.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2997

- *30 August, Algiers:* Secretary General Aboul Gheit meets with Ramtane

Lamamra, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria, to mark the beginning of his visit to Algeria to participate in the consultative ministerial meeting of the neighbouring countries of Libya. The meeting mostly includes discussions on Libya and the approaching elections.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3030

- *14 October, Cairo:* The 32nd session of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environmental Affairs takes place in Cairo. The session goes over topics including climate change, sustainable development goals, desertification and biodiversity, and sets out the Arab League's position in preparation for COP26 in Glasgow, United Kingdom.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3095

- *21 October, Tripoli:* Secretary General Aboul Gheit visits Libya and participates in the Conference to Support the Stability of Libya, where he holds meetings with Libyan leaders. The Secretary General, in his interventions, stresses the importance the Arab League attaches to the Libyan elections scheduled for December, as well as the League's support for ending all forms of foreign military presence in Libya.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3127

- *10 November, Online:* Secretary General of the Arab League Aboul Gheit participates in the ministerial conference on the Covid-19 pandemic organized online by the United States State Department. In his speech, the Secretary General stresses the importance of supporting the material and human capacities of health sectors worldwide, and of strengthening regional cooperation, towards confronting the pandemic. He also calls for a unified international effort for a fair and equitable distribution of vaccines across the world, taking into account the least developed countries and countries in conflict.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3161

- *12 November, Paris:* Secretary General Aboul Gheit participates in the Paris International Conference on Libya, where he meets with heads of state and government. On the sidelines of the conference, Aboul Gheit held a session of talks with Charles Michel, President

of the European Council. The leaders discussed future prospects for Arab-European cooperation, as the Arab League and European Union prepare a ministerial meeting and Arab-European summit next year. Topics discussed include Sudan, Libya, Palestine and other issues of common interest.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3163

- *29-30 November, Barcelona:* Secretary General Aboul Gheit takes part in the 6th Forum of the Union for the Mediterranean. The Secretary General delivers a speech in which he discusses the EU's New Agenda for the Mediterranean, and in which he welcomes recent cooperation in energy and gas through the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum. Other topics addressed include Palestine, Syria and Libya, as well as migration. On the sidelines of the forum the Secretary General meets with Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares, with whom he discusses the possibility of deepening bilateral relations, and during which the Aboul Gheit re-emphasizes the Arab League's position vis à vis the Israel-Palestine conflict and the crises in Libya and Syria.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3195

- *1 December, Cairo:* Secretary General of the Arab League Aboul Gheit receives Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, during his visit to Cairo. They discuss the deep historical and cultural ties between Spain and the Arab world, and the willingness to strengthen these ties through institutions such as Casa Árabe in Madrid. In addition, the leaders discuss the situations in Palestine and Libya.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3202

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, democracy 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://southeu.summit.com/about/athens-declaration/>

- *17 September, Athens:* The 8th Summit of the Southern European Countries takes place in Athens, bringing together the heads of state of Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain. The Summit produces a declaration which is aimed at facing the various challenges faced by southern European Union countries, including climate, health, economy, security and stability. The main issues tackled by the declaration are the following; peace, security and stability in the Mediterranean, with particular attention paid to maritime zones and issues between Turkey and Cyprus, as well as the Israel-Palestine conflict, the crises in Lebanon, Syria and Libya, the democratic process in Tunisia, and the concerning end to the Afghanistan war, and the prevention of extremism and terrorism, including in the Sahel region. Turning its focus towards the European Agenda, the declaration treats issues such as the pandemic recovery and the Next Generation EU instrument, as well as the green and digital transitions, and the European Pact on Migration and Asylum. Finally, the declaration affirms its support for the New Agenda for the Mediterranean, and emphasizes the importance of the EU's Southern Neighbourhood.

www.pio.gov.cy/assets/pdf/newsroom/2021/09/17092021_EUMED%20Joint%20Declaration.pdf