

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 interna-

tional 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 di-

plomacy, 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 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 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 2022

- *17 January, Algiers:* NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy Javier Colomina conducts an official visit to Algeria. During his visit, Mr Colomina attends meetings with high-level officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence to discuss NATO-Algeria cooperation and regional security challenges of common concern. Mr Colomina highlights Algeria's key role in North Africa and in the Sahel region, and its experience and expertise on regional security issues, including in the area of counter-terrorism. www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_191043.htm?selectedLocale=en
- *24 January, Gaeta:* Allied ships from the NATO Naval Striking and Support Forces Command and the U.S. Sixth Fleet initiate a series of patrolling activities across the Mediterranean Sea, within the framework of "Neptune Strike 2022." Neptune Strike 2022 highlights NATO's ability to integrate the high-end maritime capabilities of a carrier strike group to ensure high operational readiness across the Alliance and the defence and protection of all Allies. It is the first time since the Cold War that a full US carrier group comes under NATO command. <https://jfcnaples.nato.int/newsroom/news/2022/nato-kicks-off-vigilance-activity-neptune-strike-2022>

- *31 January, Brussels:* NATO hosts a workshop that brought Allies and 37 partner countries together to share views and ideas for the next Strategic Concept. The workshop discusses a wide range of topics including the growing instability in the age of strategic competition; threats to the rules-based international order; the future of crisis management and counter-terrorism; how to strengthen resilience; the impact of climate change on security; and emerging and disruptive technologies. www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_191348.htm?selectedLocale=en
- *22 March, Brussels:* NATO MENA Section, in collaboration with the Office of the Special Representative of the NATO Secretary General for Women, Peace and Security organize the Conference "Women Mediators and Peacebuilders in the MENA Region: Leveraging Leadership." The event focuses on the importance of women's participation in conflict resolution and politics in the MENA region. Professional and experienced women, including several mediators from the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, take part in the dialogue to present their work as peacebuilders, mediators and human rights defenders. <https://wiisitaly.org/women-mediators-and-peacebuilders-in-the-mena-region-leveraging-leadership/>
- *11-13 May, Algiers:* The Director General of the International Military Staff (DGIMS), Lieutenant General H.W. Wiermann visits Algeria, and meets the Chief of Defence Lieutenant General Saïd Chanegriha. The two military leaders discuss the ongoing NATO – Algeria partnership. The Director General highlighted Algeria's key role in North Africa and the Sahel region, as well as its experience and expertise on regional security issues, including in the area of counter-terrorism. www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_195392.htm?selectedLocale=en
- *6 June, Mediterranean Sea:* NATO ships train with the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force in the Mediterranean Sea. Standing NATO Maritime Group Two (SNMG2) ships conduct joint training exercises with those of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF). Japanese officers have the opportunity

to interact with NATO units and conduct training activities, including a manoeuvring exercise. A personnel exchange allows NATO crew members to embark the Japanese ships and vice versa. The exchanges give all participants insight into the way NATO and Japan operate at sea and fostered understanding and interoperability between the units.

<https://mc.nato.int/media-centre/news/2022/nato-ships-train-with-japan-maritime-selfdefense-force-in-mediterranean-sea>

- *20 June, Rota:* NATO's Operation Sea Guardian resumes patrols in the western Mediterranean. The OSG task unit is under the operational command of NATO's Allied Maritime Command (MARCOM). Prior to the task group departing from Rota, a delegation of MARCOM subject matter experts meet the commander task group and his staff to better prepare for their activities in the western Mediterranean. These patrols have a special focus on monitoring sea lines of communication (SLOCs), localized traffic patterns in international waters in coordination with national navies, deterring terrorism and mitigating the risk of threats to security in the Mediterranean Sea.

<https://mc.nato.int/media-centre/news/2022/nato-operation-sea-guardian-resumes-patrols-in-the-western-mediterranean>

- *29-30 June, Madrid:* NATO Leaders gather in Madrid, Spain to discuss important issues facing the Alliance. The Madrid Summit has set NATO's strategic direction for the future, ensuring that the Alliance will continue to adapt to a changing world and keep the one billion people of its member countries safe. NATO Leaders discuss challenges from the South, like the fight against terrorism, the food crisis caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and Russia and China's increasing influence in the Alliance's southern neighbourhood. The Summit also adopts new support packages for partner countries Mauritania and Tunisia.

https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_196144.htm?selectedLocale=en

- *11 August, Souda Bay:* After a week and a half of exercises in the Adriatic and Mediterranean, Standing NATO Maritime Group Two (SNMG2) is in port after its deployment, and resupplying in Crete. The task group performed unique

and tactical events such as exercises in live-fire gunnery, electronic warfare, air defence and communication. While operating together provides for increased interoperability and improved communications during dynamic exercises, it also directly supports the purpose and principles outlined in the NATO 2022 Strategic Concept.

<https://mc.nato.int/media-centre/news/2022/standing-nato-maritime-group-two-arrives-in-souda-bay--crete-for-port-visit>

- *4 November, Istanbul:* NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg meets President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. They address Russia's war in Ukraine. SG Stoltenberg commends Türkiye, and President Erdogan, for negotiating a safe passage for Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea. He welcomes the continuation of the agreement. He also commends Türkiye on its role in mediating prisoner-of-war exchanges between Ukraine and Russia, as well as for its strong support for Ukraine's right of self-defence. The two leaders also discuss finalizing Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO. Türkiye, Finland and Sweden have agreed a Trilateral Memorandum, and have now established the new Permanent Joint Mechanism. The SG welcomes the substantial, concrete steps already taken by both countries to put the memorandum into practice.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_208707.htm

- *11 November, Tunis:* Tunisia receives 4,880 kilograms of personal protective equipment from the NATO Pandemic Response Stockpile. This includes surgical masks, face shields, and hooded coveralls, and follows Tunisia's request for international assistance to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. The delivery was coordinated by the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC), NATO's main civil emergency response mechanism. The Personal Protective Equipment will be distributed to military and civilian medical facilities across the country.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_208994.htm?selectedLocale=en

- *18 November, Israel:* NATO's Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy, Ambassador B. Cadenbach, travels to Israel, where she

meets with a range of officials from Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, and the National Emergency Management Authority. The Ambassador highlights the Alliance's readiness to enhance political dialogue and continue working with Israel on several areas of mutual interest, including resilience, the impact of climate change, disruptive technologies, women, peace and security, and cyber and hybrid threats.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_209234.htm?selectedLocale=en

- *21 November, Brussels:* The NATO Military Committee invites partner Military Representatives from Australia, Colombia, Finland, Republic of Korea, Morocco, Qatar and Sweden, to a thematic discussion on Maritime Security and related activities. At the meeting, NATO officials emphasize that maritime security is key to NATO and its partners' peace and security. They depend on each other to ensure coherent, coordinated and lasting solutions to existing maritime challenges.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_209324.htm?selectedLocale=en

2. OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation

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

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

Main Events in 2022

- *30 May, Vienna:* The first 2022 meeting of the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation focuses on the

most pressing climate change challenges in the Mediterranean region and their implications for prosperity, security and stability. Chaired by North Macedonia, OSCE officials, a panel of experts and practitioners highlight the need for enhanced cooperation and partnership to build greater resilience to climate change and to take joint adaptation and mitigation measures.

www.osce.org/secretariat/519222

- *28 June, Vienna:* The OSCE holds a Mediterranean Partnership of Cooperation group meeting in Vienna focused on empowering women and youth to be part of the solutions to the repercussions from the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the ensuing economic challenges. M. Mecacci, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights emphasizes that inclusivity builds trust and makes our societies stronger, particularly in times of crisis.

www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/521290

- *12 October, Valletta:* The OSCE Transnational Threats Department's Action against Terrorism Unit (TNTD/ATU), organizes training on "Understanding the Role of Gender in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism" (P/CVERLT), with the support of the Embassy of Jordan in Vienna, and the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law. The training demonstrated how integrating a strong gender perspective and close collaboration across sectors in P/CVERLT programming and operations is more efficient and strengthens a community-oriented approach that protects and promotes human rights.

www.osce.org/secretariat/528599

- *25 October, Amman:* The 2022 OSCE Mediterranean Partners Conference takes place in Amman on the subject: "Advancing security and cooperation in the Mediterranean: fostering dialogue with the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation." The conference stresses the importance of the empowerment of youth, women, managing the climate crisis and the fight against trafficking in human beings in the Mediterranean.

www.osce.org/partners-for-cooperation/mediterranean/529611

- *4-5 July, Madrid:* The Spanish National Police hosts a meeting of OSCE Mediterranean Points of Contact Network on Border Security and Management. The meeting brings together high-level participants from the border and customs services of Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Morocco. Participants exchange information on current border security-related challenges in the region and identify future training and cooperation needs.

www.osce.org/border-management/522052

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 2022

▪ *9 March, Valencia:* On the occasion of the Third Ministerial Meeting on Water of the Western Mediterranean Forum (Dialogue 5+5), the MedThink 5+5 network of Western Mediterranean think tanks holds the thematic seminar “Building Climate Resilience in the Western Mediterranean: Water and Climate Change Adaptation Nexus.” Co-organized by the IEMed and MENBO, this event aims to provide a space for dialogue among decision-makers, experts and water professionals from both shores of the Western Mediterranean region to discuss ways to ensure water security by adapting to the impacts of climate change on water resources in the region.

<https://medthink5plus5.org/en/2022/02/16/thematic-seminar-water-and-climate-change-adaptation-nexus-in-valencia/>

▪ *10 March, Valencia:* The third ministerial conference of the Western Mediterranean Forum (5+5 Dialogue) on Water takes place under the title “Water security and climate change in the Western Mediterranean: Fostering knowledge for practice.” The conference stresses the critical importance of water security preservation under the recent challenges posed by climate change in the western Mediterranean region, especially considering the cross-cutting role that water plays in food security, health, energy transition, socioeconomic development and the preservation of water ecosystems and their biodiversity. The meeting ends with the adoption of the Valencia Declaration. Ministers and representatives of member countries of the 5+5 Dialogue commit to increasing water security by implementing Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) at all levels, especially by fully integrating non-conventional resources and adapting water management to the challenges of climate change.

<https://medthink5plus5.org/en/2022/03/14/third-ministerial-meeting-on-water-of-the-55-dialogue-in-valencia-2/>

▪ *11 October, Nouakchott:* The Fifth Ministerial Conference of the “5+5 Dialogue on Research, Innovation, and Higher Education,” chaired by Maurita-

nia and co-chaired by Italy, takes place in Nouakchott, Mauritania. The conference stresses the role of the 5+5 Dialogue in strengthening cooperation in the fields of research, innovation and higher education to promote responsible and sustainable economic growth. The meeting ends with the signature of the Nouakchott Declaration for Research, Innovation and Higher Education, together with a work plan for 2022-2024 to strengthen cooperation among the countries of the Western Mediterranean Forum. It aims to strengthen cooperation and conducive synergies in scientific research, innovation and higher education and promote social cohesion, youth employment and sustainable development in the western Mediterranean region.

<https://medthink5plus5.org/en/2022/11/04/5th-ministerial-conference-of-the-55-dialogue-on-research-innovation-in-nouakchott/>

▪ *7-8 November, Lisboa:* In the framework of the MedThink 5+5 network on blue economy in the Western Mediterranean takes place the thematic seminar “Tapping the potential of Sustainable Blue Economy in the Western Mediterranean: Policies and Practices to Accelerate the Sustainable Transformation.” The event provides a space to discuss the prospects and challenges of accelerating the transition of the blue economy towards more sustainability, while enabling western Mediterranean countries to fully tap its potential as a driver of economic development and prosperity. Participants identify the relevant economic models, policies and enablers of this transition towards a sustainable blue economy. The seminar also addresses transversal issues, such as investment opportunities and blue finance, ways to increase the participation of women in the different sectors of the blue economy, as well as the role of cooperation in the framework of the 5+5 Dialogue.

<https://medthink5plus5.org/en/2022/11/04/next-medthink-55-seminar-in-lisboa-to-discuss-blue-economy/>

4. Adriatic Ionian Initiative (All)

After the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, the fragmentation of the former Yugo-

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

Stabilization 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 Albanian Chairmanship

- *28 February, Tirana and Online:* The All/EUSAIR Trio, which consists of a meeting between representatives of past, present and future All Chairmanships (Slovenia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina) takes place online. The meeting is focused on the plans and challenges of the Albanian presidency; the Governing Board meeting and the Annual Forum and Ukraine joint statement.
www.aai-ps.org/events/event/79-aai-eusair-trio-meeting
- *2 March, Online:* The second Adriatic Ionian Initiative (All) Committee of Senior Officials under the Albanian Chairmanship takes place online, back-to-back with the 17th EUSAIR Governing Board meeting. Topics discussed include: the next Adriatic and Ionian Council/EUSAIR Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting, the preparation of the Tirana Declaration, the activities developed for young people, specifically the

All Scholarships at the Marche Polytechnic University and the internships organized in cooperation with the Forum of the Adriatic Ionian Chambers of Commerce and UniAdrion.

www.aai-ps.org/news/380-ii-aai-committee-of-senior-official-tirana-online-2-march-2022

- *5-6 May, Tirana:* The XVIII Conference of Speakers/Presidents of Parliaments of the All takes place in Tirana, organized by the National Assembly of the Republic of Albania in the framework of Albania's Chairmanship. The main topic of the Conference will be: "European Integration: Western Balkans, an Added Value of the Adriatic and Ionian Region and of the European Union."

www.aai-ps.org/news/385-xviii-conference-of-aai-speakers-of-parliaments-tirana-5-6-may-2022

- *16 May, Tirana:* The meeting of the Council of Foreign Affairs Ministers of the All and EUSAIR takes place in Tirana within the larger framework of the 7th EUSAIR annual Forum, concluding the one-year Albanian Chairmanship. At the Ministerial Meeting in Tirana, Albania hands over the one-year All Chairmanship/EUSAIR Presidency to Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the end of the Council, The Tirana Declaration, the annual strategic document which acknowledges the results achieved by the Chairmanship and sets strategic guidelines for the future, is approved.

www.aai-ps.org/images/TIRANA_declaration.pdf

Main Events during the Bosnia and Herzegovina Chairmanship

- *15-16 September, Ancona:* The 9th REDETE Conference takes place within the framework of the All Chairmanship of Bosnia and Herzegovina. REDETE (Researching Entrepreneurship and Economic Development) is a professional network of academics, businesspersons and professionals in the Western Balkan region producing, in cooperation with many other international institutions, applied research on the impacts of globalization and European integration on local Balkan communities. Topics of the conference include entrepreneurship and innovation;

regional development; cohesion policy and European identity; the political economy of ethnic reconciliation in the Western Balkans and migration.

www.aai-ps.org/news/393-9th-redete-conference-2022-15-16-september-ancona

- *5 October, Sarajevo and Online:* The first All Committee of Senior Officials under the Bosnia and Herzegovina Chairmanship takes place in Sarajevo. The All BiH Chairmanship presents the Calendar of events and priorities for the current year, together with a programme of activities of the Permanent Secretariat. Senior Officials are also informed on the outcome of the call for applications related to the All Scholarships for international students at the Marche Polytechnic University.

www.aai-ps.org/news/394-aai-committee-of-senior-official-sarajevo-5-october-2022

- *23 November, Pescara:* All and the Forum of the Adriatic Ionian Chambers of Commerce (Forum AIC) signs the convention between the All Permanent Secretariat and the Forum AIC on the "Western-BALKANship" project. The "Western-BALKANship Project" is an internship programme that allows university students to carry out mobility placements in companies and institutions from the Adriatic-Ionian region. The project aims to strengthen cooperation between countries and create opportunities for hosting entities by welcoming students from numerous universities to their organizations. The project will finance about 50 internships for university students and young graduates from faculties associated with UniAdrion (Association of the Universities of the Adriatic Ionian region).

www.aai-ps.org/news/397-signing-ceremony-of-the-western-balkanship-project-november-23

- *28 November, Zenica:* The All Round Table on Interuniversity Cooperation, named "Recovery plan for Interuniversity Cooperation in the Adriatic - Ionian Region: What can we expect for the next three years?" organized by UniAdrion takes place in Zenica. The aim of the round table is to share knowledge about future expectations, insights and comments on what the network of Adri-

atic Ionian universities can plan for the next three years.

www.aii-ps.org/news/398-round-table-on-inter-university-cooperation

- *8 December, Istanbul:* The All Permanent Secretariat takes part in the 16th Coordination Meeting of Regional Organizations held at the Permanent International Secretariat of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC), in Istanbul. The event, held on a rotating basis, is also attended by the Central European Initiative (CEI) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), with the UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub as special guest. It gives participants the chance to present their respective activities in promoting regional dialogue and cooperation and exchange views and good practices with a focus on blue economy activities, climate change and the implementation of the UN's SDGs. www.aii-ps.org/news/400-coordination-meeting-of-regional-organisations-december-8-istanbul

- *15 December, Brussels:* The European Council grants Bosnia-Herzegovina candidate status for EU membership. The All has strongly promoted candidate status for Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the Tirana Declaration adopted on 16 May 2022, the 10 Foreign Affairs Ministers of the All countries encouraged EU Member States to accelerate the EU path for the Western Balkans countries and grant candidate status to Bosnia and Herzegovina as soon as possible.

www.aii-ps.org/news/401-bosnia-herzegovina-granted-eu-candidate-status

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 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 in 2022

- *30 January, Online:* The 41st session of the Arab Women's Committee is held in conjunction with Arab Women's Day. The Committee is the Arab preparatory meeting for the 66th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. The Committee issues the "Arab Statement," which expresses the unified Arab regional position and identifies the priorities of the Arab region towards the issues that will be raised during the 66th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. The meeting also discusses a number of important issues regarding the participation of women

and girls in the context of the green economy.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3292

- *10 February, Cairo:* The Economic and Social Council holds its ministerial meeting at the headquarters of the General Secretariat. The meetings of this session discuss several topics, foremost of which are: the economic and social file submitted to the Arab Summit at its next session, as well as the follow-up to the implementation of the decisions of the Arab Economic and Social Development Summit and the preparation for the Development Summit at its fifth session, in addition to a number of economic and social issues and others related to development.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3302

- *13 February, Cairo:* Arab League Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit opens the fourth edition of the Arab Week for Sustainable Development. The SG stresses the importance of providing additional financial resources to accelerate the implementation of the sustainable development agenda, as well as the importance of the environmental dimension.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3310

- *5 April, Cairo:* The Arab Ministerial Contact Group on the crisis in Ukraine holds talks with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, focusing on efforts to reach a peaceful solution to the crisis. During the meeting, the group stresses the need for a ceasefire and ending the crisis on the basis of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, the principles of good neighbourliness and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. The Arab delegation expresses concern about the prolongation of the crisis and its humanitarian, political, security and economic consequences. The Arab delegation also discusses with the Ukrainian Foreign Minister efforts to agree on a ceasefire and reach an agreement to resolve the crisis and restore peace and security.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3392

- *9 May, Cairo:* The first Arab ministerial meeting on disaster risk reduction

takes place, preceded by the meeting of the fourth session of the Arab Coordination Mechanism for Disaster Risk Reduction. The meeting is held in light of the serious repercussions facing the Arab region of climate and environmental changes and the natural disasters that have made a significant contribution to increasing rates of desertification, forest fires, water scarcity and other natural variables, in addition to humanitarian disasters, such as armed conflicts, which have affected the MENA region, the Arab region being among the most affected by such variables.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3412

- 15-16 June, Cairo: The 12th meeting of the Arab Food Safety Group takes place at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States. The aim of the meeting is to coordinate regional efforts to harmonize food safety systems applied in the Arab region by providing an effective means of communication for the Arab Food Safety Team, as well as conducting periodic maintenance and managing it in a way that ensures food issues in the Arab region are properly addressed.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3499

- 24 July, Cairo: The Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, receives Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. The SG holds extensive talks with the Russian minister on all issues of common interest, including developments in bilateral cooperation within the framework of the memorandum of understanding signed between the two sides, as well as the memorandum of cooperation for the establishment of the Arab-Russian Cooperation Forum. The meeting also witnesses an exchange of views between the two sides on a number of regional and international issues, especially the developments in Ukraine. Aboul Gheit stresses the seriousness of the Arab diplomatic efforts for the peaceful settlement of the crisis.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3548

- 1 September, Cairo: The meeting of the Economic and Social Council at the

ministerial level takes place at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States. This session discusses several economic, social and development topics, foremost of which are: the economic and social file presented to the next Arab summit (Algeria 2022), investment in Arab countries, the informal economy in Arab countries, the agreement to regulate maritime transport, passengers and goods between Arab countries, supporting the Palestinian economy, the Arab Food Security Report for 2021, the establishment and financing of the Arab Centre for Antiquities and Cultural Heritage in the city of Tipaza, Algeria.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3580

- 6 September, Cairo: The Council of the League of Arab States holds its 158th session at foreign minister level, headed by Dr. Naglaa Al-Mangoush, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the State of Libya, who assumes the presidency, replacing Mr. Abdullah Bouhabib, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Lebanese Republic. The agenda of this session includes several items dealing with various issues of joint Arab action, in political, security, economic, legal and social spheres. On the sidelines of the session, meetings are held for three ministerial committees: the "Quartet Arab Ministerial Committee concerned with following up the developments of the crisis with Iran and ways to address its interference in the internal affairs of Arab countries," "The Arab Ministerial Committee concerned with following up Turkish interference in the internal affairs of Arab countries" and "The Arab Ministerial Committee concerned with action to confront Israeli measures in the occupied city of Jerusalem."

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3590

- 21 September, Cairo: Opening of the 48th session of the Arab Labour Conference, organized by the Arab Labour Organisation of the League of Arab States. Labour ministers, members of delegations from employers' organizations and trade unions from 21 Arab countries, representatives of the General Secretariat, Arab and interna-

tional organizations and public figures participate in the activities of the conference. Over the course of seven days, the conference discusses files related to issues and challenges facing the world of work in the Arab world, including the digital economy and employment issues, and makes recommendations on supporting development, economic growth and providing job opportunities.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3618

- 20 October, Ifrane: The Council of Arab Ministers of Justice holds its 38th session in Morocco. The session discusses topics related with the Arab Conventions on Combating Terrorism, Money Laundering, Information Technology Crimes or Corruption. The sessions also discusses draft agreements on the conditions of refugees in Arab countries, protecting personal data, hate speech and a unified model for an Arab law on narcotics, among others.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3663

- 24 November, Barcelona: Arab League Secretary General Aboul Gheit attends the seventh regional forum of the Union for the Mediterranean. The Secretary General calls on the Mediterranean countries to step up joint efforts to face the difficult challenges in the region, especially in light of the turbulent international situation imposed by the Ukrainian war. The SG reviews the priorities of the Arab League in the field of climate change and stresses that financing and compensation for losses and damages comes at the top of the priorities of the League and its member states. SG Aboul Gheit signs, along with the Secretary General of the UfM, a memorandum of cooperation between the two organizations covering a number of areas of common interest, with the aim of serving vital needs and taking into account the geographical overlap between the Arab and Mediterranean regions.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3721

- 30 November, Cairo: The "Fourth Arab Water Conference" is held at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States. The

conference includes working sessions and scientific papers dealing with issues related to water scarcity, drought and climate change. Among the topics covered in the conference are water scarcity challenges and solutions, water demand management, climate change and drought management, shared water resources and water diplomacy, non-conventional water resources and reuse technologies. The participants also discuss mechanisms and solutions for non-accountable water, the nexus between water, food and energy, water desalination and technology, groundwater resources management, enhancing financing and investment in the water sector, and water challenges in the Arab region.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3738

▪ *22 December, Riyadh:* The fourth regular session of the Arab Council for Population and Development is held under the presidency of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, that holds the presidency of the Council. The meeting states that the issue of population and development will remain a priority for the work of the Council for years to come. Developing human capital and strengthening institutions must be a focus of population policies to move forward and benefit from changing population trends. The participants are confident that, through cooperation between countries and by building knowledge and exchanging lessons learned, Arab countries will be able to

benefit from the demographic dividend and ensure sustainable economic growth.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=3792

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/>

▪ *9 December, Alicante:* Spain chairs the 9th MED-9 Summit in Alicante, holding several working sessions with the Mediterranean leaders of the European Union, and focusing mainly on the strategic autonomy and economic governance of the EU.

Against the backdrop of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and its multiple impacts, the MED-9 leaders hold a first meeting focused on the EU's strategic autonomy, with the energy issue in the spotlight and focusing their discussion on the Market Correction Mechanism, the Commission's proposal for a gas price cap. During a second working session, the MED-9 leaders address the economic framework in which the EU is operating. Regarding the upcoming review of the EU's economic governance, the nine leaders agree that European fiscal rules are extremely complex and need to be reformed on two premises: preserving sound public finances, ensuring their sustainability and reinforcing sustainable growth through increased public and private investment in areas aimed at the green and digital transition.

The MED-9 countries reiterate the importance of keeping sight of the strategic importance of relations with the Southern Neighbourhood and the desire to develop a "new common agenda for the Mediterranean."

www.lamoncloa.gob.es/presidente/actividades/Documents/2022/091222_declaracionConjuntaMED9.pdf