

Chronologies

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 2023

- *8/12 January, Amman:* Thirty participants from the Jordan Armed Forces and the Jordan Military Center for Counter Terrorism and Extremism (MCCTE) take part in this first ever NATO train-the-trainer counterterrorism programme. This civilian-military programme was tailored to Jordan's priorities under the framework of NATO's Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) Initiative, which the country has been a beneficiary of since 2014
www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_210483.htm?selectedLocale=en
- *16 May, Aqaba:* NATO and Jordan discuss border security cooperation at this three-day workshop. The event helps to identify Jordanian maritime and counterterrorism requirements and ways for NATO to improve the efficiency and sustainability of Jordan's counterterrorism capacity. The workshop is an opportunity for allies and international organizations, including the UN, the EU, the OSCE and INTERPOL, to map bilateral and multilateral assistance, as well as to identify the needs of the Jordanian Armed Forces to further improve maritime border security.
www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_214656.htm?selectedLocale=en
- *14/17 May, Cairo:* A military delegation from NATO's Cooperative Security Division, travels to Egypt to meet with senior diplomatic and military representatives to discuss their ongoing

- military cooperation and possibilities to deepen the existing partnership.
www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_214759.htm?selectedLocale=en
- *26 June, Brussels:* General Dah Sidi Mohamed El Agheb, Commander of the Joint Military Academy of Mauritania, visits NATO, where he meets with several allied representatives and members of NATO's Staff, with whom he shares views on the latest security developments in the Sahel region and on opportunities to enhance NATO's cooperation with Mauritania.
www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_216763.htm?selectedLocale=en
 - *7 September, Tel Aviv:* NATO's Deputy Secretary General visits Israel to meet with Israeli leaders and high-level officials. He meets President Isaac Herzog, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant. The Deputy Secretary General highlights NATO and Israel's close, long standing partnership, and efforts to strengthen cooperation on climate change, innovation and new technologies.
www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_218165.htm?selectedLocale=en
 - *13 September, Brussels:* The NATO International Military Staff Office of the Gender Advisor (IMS GENAD) has launched a new series of deep dives focusing on the gender perspective in different geographical regions. The first session of this series is held with a focus on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. It explores where and how the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda is prevalent among military and peacekeeping forces in the region, as well as the challenges that remain. The discussion further examines what NATO is doing and can do in the future to support a comprehensive gender perspective in the region, highlighting specific best practices learned from different national contexts.
www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_218560.htm?selectedLocale=en
 - *23 September, Cairo:* The Chair of the NATO Military Committee, Admiral Rob Bauer, visits Egypt. Admiral Bauer meets with senior political and military authorities and delivers a lecture at the Nasser Higher Military Academy. Building on almost three decades of cooperation through the Mediterranean Dia-

logue, the visit provides an important opportunity for an in-depth examination of the military cooperation between NATO and Egypt.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_218702.htm?selectedLocale=en

- *26 September, Amman:* The Chair of the NATO Military Committee, Admiral Rob Bauer, visits Jordan. Discussions with high-level military officials centre on the longstanding and valued partnership between NATO and Jordan. During his visit, the Chair also has the opportunity to visit the King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Centre and to deliver a lecture at the Royal Jordanian National Defence College.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_218700.htm?selectedLocale=en

- *27 September, Tel Aviv:* The Chair of the NATO Military Committee, Admiral Rob Bauer, visits Israel. Admiral Bauer meets with President Yitzhak Herzog. The Chair also receives a briefing from senior Israeli defence officials; speaks to the Israeli Defence Force's Senior Forum; visits the Gaza border crossing; and delivers a speech at the National Security College.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_218698.htm?selectedLocale=en

- *3 October, Amman:* NATO and Jordan co-host a conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) control. The event was the first of its kind on SALW organized with partner countries, as part of NATO's defence and related security capacity building package for Jordan. The event provides an opportunity to reflect on initiatives, lessons learned and best practices in SALW control in the Middle East and North Africa in particular, and to exchange views on challenges and potential solutions at regional and global levels.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_219008.htm?selectedLocale=en

- *12 October, Brussels:* NATO Allies condemn the horrific terrorist attacks by Hamas against Israel in a meeting of Defence Ministers. Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant briefed ministers by video conference on the atrocities by Hamas perpetrated against Israeli civilians and the nationals of several NATO Allies. Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that NATO condemns the terrorist attacks in the strongest possible

terms, adding: "Israel does not stand alone." Allies expressed solidarity with Israel, making clear that it has the right to defend itself with proportionality against these unjustifiable acts of terror.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_219309.htm?selectedLocale=en

- *19 October, Brussels:* NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg meets with a group of independent allied experts to discuss NATO's approach to its southern neighbourhood – particularly the Middle East, North Africa and Sahel regions. Established in early October, the group is composed of eleven experts, chaired by Professor Ana Santos Pinto from Portugal. The group will take stock of evolving developments and identify concrete recommendations to shape the Alliance's future approach, including by outlining opportunities for further engagement and cooperation with partner nations, international organizations and other relevant actors.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_219491.htm?selectedLocale=en

- *6 November, Brussels:* NATO's SG Jens Stoltenberg welcomes His Majesty King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to NATO for talks on the Alliance's partnership with Amman and regional security challenges. His Majesty participates in a meeting of the North Atlantic Council, addressing security challenges facing the Middle East and North Africa, including the conflict in Gaza.

www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_219781.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 fi-

nally 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 usually 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 partici-

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 2023

- *30 May, Vienna:* The OSCE holds a Mediterranean Partnership of Cooperation group meeting in Vienna, focused on promoting participation of youth in confidence and security building. The participants consider that the challenges related to youth and gender equality are key to address, as solutions to current and upcoming problems might take into account both perspectives in order to guarantee inclusiveness and a holistic approach to the present challenges. www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/vienna-international-organisations/osce-mediterranean-partners-co-operation-group-vienna-11-december-2023_en

- *7 November, Vienna:* Five participants from both OSCE Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation have the opportunity to spend two weeks with the OSCE in Vienna to participate in OSCE meetings and events. The study visit includes several briefings regarding the history and structure of the OSCE as well as the organization's activities on gender equality, youth, economic and environmental issues, transnational threats and combating human trafficking. www.osce.org/secretariat/557502

- *20 November, Yerevan:* The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Mediterranean Forum focuses on the Israeli-Palestine conflict and stresses that the conflict must be resolved on the basis of mutual security. The Mediterranean Forum also includes addresses by parliamentary delegations from OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. www.oscepa.org/en/news-a-media/press-releases/press-2023/osce-pas-mediterranean-forum-focuses-on-situation-in-the-middle-east

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 2023

- *13 December, Lisbon:* The representatives of the 10 member states of the dialogue attend the 19th ministerial meeting of the Defence Initiative of the 5+5 Dialogue. Participants discuss the work carried out in 2023 and set a common 2024 agenda for the 5+5 Defence Initiative, which will be chaired by Spain. The meeting's participants express the need to deploy partnership strategies among the countries on both shores of the western Mediterranean, as well as to plan realistic collaborative development programmes. <https://medthink5plus5.org/en/2023/12/14/19th-ministerial-meeting-of-the-55-defence-initiative/>

- *25/26 May, Lisbon:* The first face-to-face meeting of the Group of Senior

Officials (GSO) of the 5+5 Dialogue Research, Innovation and Higher Education takes place in Lisbon. The meeting makes a very positive contribution to the implementation of the set of seven actions of the 2023-2024 work plan. Future meetings, workshops and seminars are planned, with the aim of creating networks between research, innovation and higher education institutions and all the actors in the respective national systems. The meeting also enjoys the active participation of the European Commission and the Union for the Mediterranean, which offer their political support to this Dialogue and towards the implementation of the actions. During Portugal's Presidency, which will last until the fall of 2024, the GSO has already met virtually with the aim of making progress on the implementation of the Nouakchott Declaration.

www.fiveplusfive.rhe.org/post/14th-group-senior-officials-took-place-under-portuguese-presidency

4. Adriatic Ionian Initiative (AII)

After the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, the fragmentation of the former Yugoslavia and the growing tensions among ethnic, cultural and religious groups in the Balkan area, the EU, in its attempts to cope with these crises, promoted the "Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe" for 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 (AII) was established at the Summit on the Development and Security of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, held in Ancona (Italy) in May 2000. At the end of the Conference, the Foreign Ministers of the participating countries, Italy, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece and Slovenia signed the "Ancona Declaration" in order to strengthen regional cooperation to promote political and economic stability, thus creating a solid base for the process of European integration. Today, the AII has eight members: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. The initiative's

Chairmanship rotates every May/June according to alphabetical criteria. Greece's chairmanship 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 gave 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 was 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 East-side 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" was 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 was 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 Stake-

holders Platform, as soon as it is fully operational.

Main Events during the Bosnia and Herzegovina Chairmanship

- *15 March, Brussels:* The second All Committee of Senior Officials under Bosnia and Herzegovina Chairmanship takes place back-to-back with the 19th EUSAIR Governing Board. After a brief report on the activities conducted so far under BiH Chairmanship, All senior officials discuss the achievements of the Presidency so far and the planned activities until the end of the Presidency in May. Further topics discussed are: the next Adriatic and Ionian Council/EUSAIR Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting; the preparation of the Sarajevo Declaration and the activities developed for young people. www.aii-ps.org/news/404-ii-aii-committee-of-senior-official-brussels-15-march-2023
- *4/5 May, Banja Luka:* The meeting "Mid-term Evaluation of the Implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in All Member States" is an opportunity for a regional analysis of the state of play of the Agenda 2030 implementation process in the 10 member countries, taking into account that they are at a mid-point since the SDGs were adopted in September 2015 until 2030. www.aii-ps.org/news/406-aii-conference-on-mid-term-evaluation-of-the-implementation-of-the-united-nations-sustainable-development-goals-in-aii-member-states-banja-luka-4-5-may-2023
- *23/24 May, Sarajevo:* The main topic of the 8th EUSAIR forum is how to fight "brain drain" in the context of EU enlargement. Several events organized by youth organizations, a central event on sustainable rural development, another central event on the possible introduction of social pillars in the EUSAIR, as well as other gatherings around innovation and the circular economy explore the possibilities for improving the situation. www.aii-ps.org/news/408-8th-eusair-forum-23-25-may-2023-sarajevo-2
- *24 May, Sarajevo:* The Sarajevo Declaration is adopted on 24 of May 2023 by the high-level political representatives

of the All/EUSAIR participating countries following the 8th Adriatic Ionian Council / EUSAIR Ministerial meeting. www.aii-ps.org/images/SARAJEVO_DECLARATION_FINAL.pdf

Main Events during the Croatia Chairmanship

- *4/5 July, Zagreb:* The conference on "Strong Women for a stronger Adriatic-Ionian Region" aims to celebrate the diversity and strength of the Adriatic-Ionian region by showcasing remarkable individuals who play a vital role in its growth and prosperity. The conference emphasizes the achievements of strong women in particular in paving the way for a more robust and empowered Adriatic-Ionian region. www.aii-ps.org/images/EUSAIR_program_nupdate_compressed_1.pdf
- *30 August, Ancona:* The All Permanent Secretariat supports the Adriatic Mediterranean Festival - the traditional late summer festival that takes place in Ancona and gathers musicians, writers and artists from all over the Adriatic-Ionian region and the Mediterranean. This year's edition was dedicated to the country that holds the current All Chairmanship, Croatia. www.aii-ps.org/news/414-adriatic-mediterranean-festival-2023-30-august-3-september
- *11 October, Dubrovnik:* The first All Committee of Senior Officials under Croatian Chairmanship takes place, at the end of the first session of the 21st EUSAIR Governing Board. During the meeting, the calendar of events and the priorities of the current year (1 June 2023 – 31 May 2024) of the All Croatian Chairmanship are presented together with a programme of activities of the Permanent Secretariat. www.aii-ps.org/news/415-i-aii-committee-of-senior-officials-dubrovnik-11-october-2023
- *25 October, Zagreb:* An Adriatic-Ionian Initiative Round Table on the Development of Green Tourism Products and Balanced Tourism Development takes place to highlight the importance of developing green tourism products and achieving a balanced approach to tourism development. The word balance has a positive significance with great

relevance for the tourism of the future, and both people and the environment would benefit from such a development. Many EUSAIR member states introduce new strategies and action plans that emphasize the importance of balancing between periods of high and low tourism seasons and between the number of tourists and local residents.

www.aii-ps.org/news/416-round-table-on-tourism-zagreb-25-october-2023

- *5 December, Ancona*: The All Permanent Secretariat hosts the 17th Coordination Meeting of Regional Organization. The Meeting is also attended by the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), the Central European Initiative (CEI) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). Special guests are the For of Civil Society: the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce, the Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities and UniAdriatic and the Network of Adriatic Ionian Universities. The overall objective of the meeting was to exchange views and information on the activities carried out by each of these organizations, as well as to discuss possibilities and modalities to further enhance synergies, interaction and coordination in areas of common interest.

www.aii-ps.org/news/419-17th-coordination-meeting-of-regional-organization-5-december-023-ancona

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 co-operation on issues regarding economics, communication, culture, nationality, social welfare and health. The LAS' tradition 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.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/

Main Events in 2023

- *30 March, Cairo*: Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, the Secretary-General (SG) of the League of Arab States, receives the leaders of EU missions in the Middle East and North Africa, along with several officials from the EU's external work apparatus. During the meeting, the participants discuss several issues of common interest, including recent regional and international developments, particularly in the Middle East. They also discuss the impact of the conflict in Ukraine on the region and the Arab countries' stance towards these issues.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/en/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2279

- *6 April, Cairo*: SG Ahmed Aboul Gheit receives the President of the Republic of Cyprus, N. Christodoulides. During the meeting, they witness an exchange of views on important regional and international issues. These include recent developments in Jerusalem, as well as the situation in Syria and Libya. The discussion also covers the repercussions of the war in Ukraine on the Arab and European regions, as well as the overall situation in the Middle East region.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/en/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2273

- *31 May, online*: The sixth high-level Arab conference on children's rights is held under the title "An Effective and Sustainable Investment in Development to Ensure the Rights of Arab Children." The sustainable development plan pre-

sents an opportunity to confront the major developmental challenges faced by the Arab world, with the ultimate objective of safeguarding the rights of all children, who are affected by a variety of pressing issues such as climate change, digitization and mass communications, natural disasters, food insecurity and widening economic and social disparities.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/en/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2283

- *31 May, Cairo*: SG Ahmed Aboul Gheit receives Mr. Mohamed Shtayyeh, Prime Minister of the State of Palestine. During the meeting, the SG shares the General Secretariat's recent consultations and its vision for diplomatic action in the future to elevate the international status of the Palestinian State and garner increased support in favour of its recognition. The SG emphasizes the importance of continuing to pursue and develop ideas and initiatives that strengthen the Arab Peace Initiative.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/en/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2258

- *12/14 June, Cairo*: The fourth forum of electoral administrations in the Arab countries, themed "Media and Elections," gathers numerous heads and members of Arab electoral administrations and bodies, along with representatives from international organizations. The primary objective of this forum is to facilitate discussions on the multifaceted role of media throughout the electoral process.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/en/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2331

- *13 June, Cairo*: SG Ahmed Aboul Gheit warns against Israel's plans to construct thousands of settlements in the occupied West Bank. He notes that these plans pose a severe threat to the two-state solution by usurping the very lands which are intended to serve as the foundation for a future Palestinian state. The SG urges the US administration to adopt a resolute stance against the proposed Israeli plans as a means of safeguarding the two-state solution that Washington is actively advocating.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/en/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2291

- *21 June, Rabat*: The 53rd session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Information is attended by information ministers

from Arab countries and their representatives, as well as heads of media organizations. The meetings focus on several important topics, including the continued media support for the legitimate Palestinian cause, with a particular emphasis on occupied Jerusalem. The Council also follows up on the implementation of the Arab media movement plan abroad, including the observatory project and the integrated platform. The agenda includes updating the Arab media strategy and developing its implementation plan, as well as implementing the goals of the Arab media map for sustainable development 2030.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/en/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2294

- *27/31 August, Cairo:* The 112th ordinary session of the Economic and Social Council of the League of Arab States discusses several proposals of the member states, which include an initiative to support efforts to salvage the agricultural season in the Republic of Sudan; the establishment of a Council of Ministers for Arab Cybersecurity; the establishment of a regional centre for underwater cultural heritage; investments in education, particularly digital education or developments related to the Greater Arab Free Trade Area and support for the Palestinian economy.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/en/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2367

- *6 September, Cairo:* The foreign ministers of the member states attend the 160th session of the Council of the League of Arab States. The agenda for this session encompasses various topics related to joint Arab action, spanning political, security, economic, legal and social issues.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/en/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2359

- *26 September, Cairo:* The Arab agricultural ministers' meeting focuses on "Arab food security and financing." The meeting discusses the development of various strategies and plans focused on Arab food security and emphasizes the critical hurdle of insufficient funding hindering the implementation of these Arab plans and strategies.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/en/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2386

- *7 October, Cairo:* SG Ahmed Aboul Gheit has urgently called for an immedi-

ate cessation of military operations in Gaza. He reiterates his previous warnings, emphasising that Israel's violent and extremist policies are a ticking time bomb that undermine the prospects for regional stability in the foreseeable future. The SG also states the international community's responsibility for the current situation.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/en/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2389

- *11 October, Cairo:* The League Council holds an extraordinary session at the level of foreign ministers, focused on the ongoing escalation between Hamas and Israel. The meeting discusses political measures to stop Israeli aggression and promote peace and security.

<http://www.leagueofarabstates.net/en/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2391>

- *14 October, Cairo:* SG Ahmed Aboul Gheit receives the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs. They discuss the ongoing Israeli escalation in the Gaza Strip. They agree on the urgent need for an immediate ceasefire and the provision of essential relief to civilians in the Gaza Strip, including the creation of safe passages and delivering humanitarian aid to the population, whose suffering is intensifying by the hour. On the same day, the SG also receives the German Foreign Minister. The two officials discuss the grave developments in the Gaza Strip.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/en/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2393

- *26 October, Cairo:* SG Ahmed Aboul Gheit expresses his deep disappointment in response to the UN Security Council's failure to pass two resolutions related to the situation in Gaza. He said that the failure is indicative of a significant lack of a genuine international commitment to ending the military operation conducted by the Israeli occupation in the Gaza Strip, despite the glaring violations of international humanitarian law through the deliberate targeting of civilians.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/en/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2421

- *5 November, Cairo:* The General Secretariat of the League of Arab States hosts an emergency meeting focused on continuing to deliver diverse forms of humanitarian and relief support to the

Gaza Strip. The objective is to ensure the sustained delivery of the necessary aid to Gaza, channelling ample quantities of vital humanitarian assistance to the residents of the Strip.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/en/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2443

- *29 November, New York:* SG Ahmed Aboul Gheit meets Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations. The meeting takes place during Aboul Gheit's participation in a UN Security Council session dedicated to the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which addresses the situation in Gaza. The discussion results in a broad consensus on the imperative need to swiftly halt the war in Gaza. There is a shared commitment to facilitating sustainable aid to the Strip in a manner that effectively addresses the pressing needs of the population on the brink of famine.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/en/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2464

- *5/6 December, Tangier:* A high-level event marks the official launch of the Arab Plan for Education and Training in Human Rights. The event aims to discuss strategies for the plan's implementation. The plan stands as a key objective within the broader framework of the Arab Strategy for Human Rights, adopted in March 2019 at summit level.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/en/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2474

- *10/12 December, Cairo:* The 56th meeting of the Implementation and Follow-up Committee of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area discusses obstacles that hinder the implementation of regional provisions and explores the proposal to establish a trade observatory, which aims to enhance communication among focal points in the region for faster issue resolution and to overcome trade obstacles. The meeting also updates the implementation of new annexes complementary to the region's executive programme, covering areas such as technical restrictions on trade, sanitation and phytosanitary measures, trade facilitation and intellectual property.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/en/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2488

- *13/14 December, Doha:* The 26th session of the Arab Ministerial Council for Tourism gathers numerous tourism

ministers from Arab countries. The primary objective is to foster cooperation and coordination with the goal of enhancing intra-Arab tourism, fostering a conducive environment for the development and improvement of tourism services, facilitating travel and movement between Arab countries, staying abreast of global changes in the tourism industry, and strengthening cooperative relations in sustainable tourism development.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/en/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2507

- *20 December, Cairo:* During the 43rd session of the Arab Ministers of Social Affairs, participants express their ongoing support for the people of the Gaza Strip in response to the persistent oppressive actions of Israel, the occupying power. A commitment to sustain this aid is made until stability is achieved, initiating the process of mitigating the profound social and humanitarian repercussions faced by the residents of the Gaza Strip. The ministers endorse various strategies, plans and programmes focused on eradicating multidimensional poverty, advancing the rights of individuals with disabilities, and addressing issues related to the elderly, family and childhood.

www.leagueofarabstates.net/en/news/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?RID=2524

6. Summit of the Southern European Union Countries

The first 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://southsummit.com/about/athens-declaration/>

- *18 May, Valletta:* On the occasion of the first Med-9 Energy Ministerial summit, the ministers sign the Malta Statement on the Mediterranean region as a hub of green energy corridors: accelerating the EU's drive for a decarbonized, energy-independent future. The ministers confirm their commitment to ensure continuous effort to improve energy security, energy affordability and to ac-

celerate the transition towards renewable energy.

<https://parlament.mt/media/122422/med9-energy-ministerial-summit.pdf>

- *22 November, Madrid:* The foreign ministers of Malta and Spain, Ian Borg and Jose Manuel Albares, co-chair the first foreign affairs ministerial meeting of the MED-9, which focuses mainly on the situation in Gaza and the Middle East. The Ministers highlight the special relationship with the countries of the Middle East and the desire to make progress in coordination and cooperation between the partners.

www.exteriores.gob.es/es/Comunicacion/Noticias/Paginas/Noticias/20231122_MINISTERIO06.aspx

- *29 September, Valletta:* Malta chairs the tenth MED-9 Summit in Valletta, holding several working sessions with the Mediterranean leaders of the European Union. The leaders urge the adoption of the revamped Pact on Migration and Asylum, which will seek to relieve pressure on frontline countries by relocating some arrivals to other EU Member States. The leaders also express their solidarity for the terrible destruction and loss of life as a result of recent natural disasters in our neighbourhood. The leaders express their commitment to find and push forward innovative and strategic solutions based on dialogue, that contribute towards comprehensive European policies that promote peace, stability and prosperity.

www.statewatch.org/media/4065/eu-med9-valletta-summit-statement-sep-23.pdf