



Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs (MFA Meeting) of the CEI Member States

Virtual, 23 June 2021

Communiqué

The annual Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Central European Initiative (CEI) was held via videoconference on 23 June 2021, under the Montenegrin CEI Presidency and in cooperation with the CEI-Executive Secretariat (CEI-ES).

The Meeting under the topic "Shaping Europe's Future, Building Prosperous Region: Enlargement, Rapprochement, Recovery" was chaired by H.E. Mr. Đorđe Radulović, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, and was attended by high officials of CEI Member States, the CEI-Executive Secretariat as well as by Special Guests of the Presidency.

The Ministers, acknowledging that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose acute global challenges, affirmed the need to work together to better respond to threats through invigorated and effective multilateralism, and enhanced regional cooperation.

In this context, the Ministers reiterated the CEI's valuable role in fostering constructive regional cooperation among its 17 Member States from Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, both members and non-members of the EU, encompassing an area from the Baltic to the Adriatic and the Black Seas.

They also reemphasized the commitment of their countries to the strategic goals embedded in the CEI's mission: the political project of European integration and cooperation for the sustainable development of all its Member States, expressing further support to the CEI mandate, as well as for the effective tackling of the post-COVID consequences.

Confirming that the CEI Member States share the objective of a peaceful, strong, stable and united Europe, the Ministers acknowledged the need to join efforts to foster respect for the principles of international law, including the guiding principles of the OSCE, notably the territorial integrity.

They expressed their unequivocal support for a credible, merit-based European perspective for the Western Balkans, thus contributing to the security, democracy and sustainable development of the region and the continent. In this regard, the role of the CEI countries holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU remains particularly instrumental in keeping the EU enlargement high on the EU agenda.

The Ministers agreed on the importance of the cooperation and gradual economic integration between the Eastern European CEI Member States – as envisaged in the EU Associated/DCFTA Agreements - and the EU, including where appropriate in the framework of the Eastern Partnership post-2020, and based on shared European values and standards as well as acknowledging Partners' European aspirations and commitments, including their respective reform paths.

The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to upholding democratic values and respect for human rights. In this regard, they underlined the importance of combating disinformation and false propaganda. They concurred on the need to defend the rule of law and fundamental rights as core constituents of the European value system and, specifically, as basic prerequisites for the success in tackling the pandemic.

Acknowledging the importance of promoting sustainable development, the Ministers affirmed the need of their countries for making a tangible contribution to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as the right roadmap to deal with crises. They also expressed the commitment to gender equality and women empowerment in all spheres of life that is crucial to making progress across all SDGs.

Convinced that building upon and relying on regional partnerships and joint commitments is necessary to effectively tackle challenges that transcend national borders, the Ministers reconfirmed the importance of regional fora, and in that context they underlined that the CEI activities should continue through its well-established platform for political and inter-governmental cooperation, reinforced parliamentary and economic dimensions, and strategic links with the EU, enhanced cooperation with the UN and other stakeholders.

The Ministers welcomed possibilities for further developing cooperation initiatives in the upcoming period, focused on joint actions related to post-COVID recovery, in the field of health, through the cooperation with the WHO/Europe; and in the economic field, through cooperation with relevant international economic players; as well as on those related to other transboundary issues such as environment, science and connectivity, also paying special attention to youth, in the framework of the CEI Youth Agenda, and developing the Local Dimension.

The Ministers commended the projects and activities supported by the traditional CEI instruments and funds and agreed to consider strengthening the potential of the CEI Co-operation Fund, also through the possibility of reviewing the current scale of annual contributions.

The Ministers commended the efforts of the CEI-Executive Secretariat to further improve the efficiency of the Organisation, and expressed best wishes to the Secretary General and Alternate Secretary General for the renewal of their respective mandates.

They thanked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro for the excellent organisation of the Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the CEI Member States.