



TRIESTE CEI PLATFORM

CONFERENCE OF THE CHAIRPERSONS OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEES
AND OF THE NATIONAL DELEGATIONS TO THE PARLIAMENTARY DIMENSION OF THE CEI
MEMBER STATES

Trieste, 13 October 2023

Final Declaration

The Chairpersons of the Foreign Affairs Committees and the Chairpersons of the National Delegations to the Parliamentary Dimension of the Member States of the Central European Initiative (CEI) met in Trieste on 13 October 2023. They emphasised the need to bolster a renewed multilateral approach to better represent the shared interests by strengthening the CEI as the primary and most extensive forum for regional cooperation in this vast and diverse area.

The CEI, established in 1989 to promote east-west axis reconstruction and European unity through regional cooperation, has significantly contributed to economic, social, and territorial cohesion in its region. It has also spread fundamental values aligning with the European Union (EU).

Adapting to many evolving events in Europe over the past three decades, the CEI owes its success to Member State commitment, an effective methodology blending multilateral diplomacy and regional projects, and a multilevel governance built on four dimensions (governmental, parliamentary, economic, and local).

However, current European circumstances show a slow EU candidate integration process, the aggression by Russia against Ukraine is directly threatening the peace and security in the Western Balkans, a hindering of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, and an increasing illegal immigration via the Balkan route. These signs of instability highlight the imperative to enhance political cooperation and fortify the CEI's role as a multilateral political platform.

The Chairpersons reaffirm their commitment to Ukraine's and Moldova's future EU membership and recognise that the countries' place - together with other candidate and potential candidate countries - is in the European Union, considering it a geostrategic investment in a stable, united and strong Europe.

Amidst these geopolitical shifts, a more defined framework of interests is emerging among CEI Member States, encompassing both EU member countries and those aspiring for future EU accession, without any overlaps with the other existing cooperation formats. This framework emphasises the shared commitment to address challenges along the Union's Eastern and Southeastern flank and multilateral levels.

To this end, the CEI could act as a regional platform, formulating common positions that could then be advocated in other multilateral forums. This would result in strong support for the EU enlargement process as an antidote to nationalist tendencies and external influence as well as an essential component of a broader objective: strengthening the Union as a global player.

Therefore, in expressing a common vision regarding the need to give new political impetus to the action of the CEI to better represent those political objectives that are common for its members, and allowing its Member States to participate more actively in the construction of a strong, sustainable, and inclusive Europe, the Chairpersons of the CEI PD National Delegations and Committees on Foreign Affairs of CEI Member States propose to their respective Ministers of Foreign Affairs and their Parliaments, the establishment of a *Convention for the strengthening of the Central European Initiative*, by appointing two Members of Parliament and a government representative from each country.

Coordinated by the Executive Secretariat, this Convention will draft a proposal aimed at reinforcing the CEI in order to encourage regional cooperation and a renewed multilateral approach in Central, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans.

The Chairpersons have agreed that the Convention meetings will start in January 2024 at the venues identified by the current Presidency, in agreement with the Executive Secretariat, which will prepare the agenda for the meetings. The Presidents hope that the Convention's work will conclude by May 2024. In this regard, they have agreed that the final meeting will be held in Rome. The Convention's work will focus on the following themes:

1. Political objectives and CEI institutional mission, as well as enlargement and various participation options (observer countries, supporting countries...) in the Organisation, considering the current geopolitical circumstances in Europe.
2. Updating and strengthening the CEI governance to achieve political objectives shared by Member States; funding mechanisms to support the Organisation's development.

The proposal elaborated within the framework of the Convention will finally be presented not only to the CEI Parliamentary Assembly, but also to the national Parliaments and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the CEI Member States, thus enhancing the link between the Parliamentary and Governmental Dimensions of the Organisation so that recommendations can be developed.