



Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Central European Initiative

Island of Brijuni, 1998

Final Document

Introduction

1. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Central European Initiative (CEI) held their annual meeting on the Island of Brijuni on 5 and 6 June 1998. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Mate Granic, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, which holds the CEI Presidency for the year of 1998.
2. The Plenary Session was attended by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs or their representatives of Albania, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Ukraine. It was further attended by the representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), European Union (EU), Council of Europe, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in their capacity as Special Guests, by the Director General of the CEI - Executive Secretariat and the Head of the Secretariat for CEI Projects at the EBRD.
3. The Ministers exchanged views on the latest political, economic and security related developments in Europe, especially those affecting the CEI region. In this context they discussed the role of the CEI and of co-operation among its Member States.
4. The Ministers reaffirmed that the strategy of cohesion in Europe and of solidarity with member countries which are in special need of assistance, as defined by the CEI Summit 1997 in Sarajevo, shall continue to be actively pursued by the CEI.

Recognising the importance and determining impact of EU and NATO enlargement and co-operation policies for a dynamic and ongoing process of European integration and for extending the benefits of stability, economic prosperity and security to all countries in the region, they called on the European and international organisations to co-operate with the aim of attaining the goals of cohesion and solidarity in Europe.

5. The Ministers expressed their deep concern in relation to the critical situation in Kosovo and affirmed their strong commitment to a peaceful and democratic settlement of the crisis in the region. To this end they issued a separate statement.

6. With regard to the implementation of the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina the Ministers expressed appreciation for the positive developments achieved so far and called on all the Parties to the Washington and Dayton Agreements, also in view of the forthcoming elections, to fully co-operate with the High Representative and the OSCE in order to foster the process. All the obligations taken as signatories of the Peace Agreement should be fulfilled. The CEI reiterates its readiness to participate in the monitoring of the forthcoming elections.

They expressed their support for the conclusions of the Conference held in Banja Luka on 28 April 1998 concerning the voluntary return in safety and dignity of all the refugees and displaced persons throughout the region. They underlined the importance of this return process for the stability in the region and in this regard they noted that the concerned Parties are committed unconditionally the return of refugees and displaced persons.

In recalling with satisfaction the peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium in the Republic of Croatia, they emphasised the urgent need that the Croatian Government, together with the local Serb population, continues to work further on creating the best conditions for peaceful coexistence within the civil society of Croatia. In this regard the Ministers took note of the activities of the Joint Working Group on Operational Procedures of Return and of the National Committee for the Establishment of Trust, Accelerated Return and Normalisation of Life in War Affected Territories of the Republic of Croatia.

They took note of the recent constructive actions taken by the Croatian Government regarding the creation of the Operational Frameworks for Facilitating the Voluntary and Safe Return of Refugees to the Republic of Croatia. The Ministers stressed the utmost importance that these decisions will be implemented in a positive way and that a clear and comprehensive plan for the return of refugees will be produced in close co-operation with the UNHCR.

The Ministers expressed their opinion that visible progress achieved in this regard will contribute to obtaining larger international involvement in efforts towards the reconstruction and development of Croatia and the alleviation of consequences of war.

Political part

7. Recognising that the economic and social recovery of the war-torn areas in the CEI region is a vital element of the peace process the Ministers evaluated the work undertaken by the CEI Working Group for the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia and reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of the specific activities enlisted in the CEI Plan of Action 1998-1999 (Plan of Action), in co-operation with the international community.

8. The Ministers acknowledged with satisfaction that Albania has overcome the last year's crisis and stressed that the process of stabilisation of the situation needs continuing and developing in line with the European democratic standards. They underlined the need to intensify the co-operation in the process of rehabilitation of the Albanian economy, as it has been envisaged in the Plan of Action.

9. The Ministers reiterated the importance of the implementation of the decision of the Lisbon 1996 OSCE Summit and conclusions of the Copenhagen 1997 OSCE Ministerial Meeting taken on the re-orientation of the conflict in the eastern region of the Republic of Moldova on the basis of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, as well as early, orderly and complete withdrawal of the Russian troops from the Republic of Moldova.

10. The Ministers appreciated the recent meeting of Political Directors of the Ministries for Foreign Affairs held in Sofia on 22 May 1998 under the co-chairmanship of Bulgaria and Croatia. The results and suggestions of the Political Directors are reflected in the Final Document of the present meeting, particularly regarding the political dialogue between EU and CEI, and in the statement on Kosovo. They welcomed the increasing involvement of Bulgaria in the CEI activities.

11. The Ministers stressed the important role of NATO for peace and stability in Europe and considered that the further enlargement of NATO with the CEI countries which have applied for membership to the Alliance as well as intensified co-operation in the framework of the Partnership for Peace Programme should contribute to European security.

12. The Member States of CEI recognise that the ongoing enlargement of the EU is the most important process designed to extend political stability, economic prosperity and security to the adjacent regions and to contribute to wider European co-operation. In this context, they welcomed with appreciation the launching of the European Conference; the beginning of the accession process of the eleven applicant countries, among them seven Member States of the CEI; and the opening of bilateral negotiations on EU accession with the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia; and expressed their hope that accession negotiations could soon begin also with Bulgaria, Romania and Slovak Republic.

They also welcomed the entering into force of the Co-operation Agreement between Macedonia and the European Community and the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement between EU and Ukraine, and the forthcoming entering into force of the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement between EU and Moldova, as steps towards the signing of a Europe Agreement.

Sharing the opinions on the need to avoid new dividing lines across the continent, and the role of the CEI in this context, the Ministers expressed their hope that this enlargement of the EU will remain an open, inclusive, continuous and transparent process, based on individual assessment of each country's compliance with the membership criteria and embracing all applicant CEI Member States. They underlined that the CEI framework can be instrumental in terms of support from the present EU and CEI Member States to the candidate countries. This framework could also be used for

exchanging experiences between the applicant countries at the various stages of accession.

Reviewing the modalities for co-operation between the CEI and the EU the Ministers emphasised the importance of a political dialogue as an instrument for strengthening the cohesion in Europe and of further implementation of the Commission Report to the Dublin European Council on EU-CEI co-operation.

Consequently the Ministers called upon the EU to consider a meeting at a political level between the CEI Troika plus Italy and the EU Troika, with the participation of the European Commission represented at an appropriate level, aimed at exploring the possibilities of co-operation. They asked the National Co-ordinators to prepare a draft platform for the development of co-operation between the CEI and the EU in order to facilitate and prepare the meeting adequately.

Implementation of the CEI Plan of Action 1998-1999

13. The Ministers reiterated their commitment to the implementation of the Plan of Action 1998-1999.

The Ministers appreciated the efficient approach to the CEI co-operation of the Croatian Presidency.

The work of the CEI bodies and relations with the international organisations have been activated, made transparent and concrete. It contributes more to the continuity and dynamism of the European integration processes and, in particular, brings non-candidate countries closer to the European structures and their standards.

14. The Ministers took note with appreciation of the good neighbourly co-operation among CEI Member States where, since the past CEI Summit, a number of new initiatives and efforts has been developed, in particular high level bilateral and trilateral meetings.

15. The Ministers noted with appreciation the progress achieved by the CEI Working Groups in the implementation of the Plan of Action. They encouraged the Working Groups to undertake further efforts in order to intensify their activities aimed at the overall implementation of the CEI strategy. In this context, they empowered the CEI Chairman-in-Office to present at the meeting of the Prime Ministers a report on the stage of implementation of the CEI strategy. The Ministers recommended that such reports be presented on a yearly basis for evaluating the CEI activities and the progress achieved in the implementation of the Initiative's strategy.

16. The Ministers expressed their satisfaction with the constructive work done in the field of human dimension, within the framework of the Plan of Action. They underlined that the promotion of internationally recognised human rights and civil society standards in all European states should represent one of the major goals of the CEI. To this end, the Ministers further welcomed the starting of the activities of the CEI Ad Hoc Expert Group on Human Dimension, and the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Combating Organised Crime.

17. The Ministers noted that the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Human Dimension identified some areas for co-operation, such as: exchange of information and experience on the implementation of international human rights, documents and agreements adopted at the national level; co-operation concerning the exchange of experience in the establishment and functioning of an ombudsperson; protection of the rights of the child; protection of women's rights, encouragement and facilitation of people to people contacts, and treatment of prisoners.

18. The Ministers expressed their satisfaction with the work undertaken by the Ad Hoc Expert Group on Organised Crime, in particular with the preparations for the Meeting of the Ministers of the Interior scheduled for October 1998 in Trieste. The Ministers considered the possible transformation of the CEI Ad Hoc Expert Group on Combating Organised Crime into the Working Group on Organised Crime.

19. The Ministers took note of the results of the recent meeting of the Working Group on Minorities held in Bucharest on 19 May 1998 for the first time under the co-chairmanship of Hungary and Romania, including the preparation of the Symposium on Minorities in the CEI Member States to be held in Gorizia in November 1998.

20. The Ministers welcomed the adoption by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights of a resolution calling *inter alia* upon all the states that still maintain the death penalty to establish a moratorium on executions, with a view to completely abolish the death penalty. They expressed their conviction that abolition of the death penalty contributes to the enhancement of human dignity and to the progressive development of human rights.

21. The Ministers encouraged all Member States to actively participate in the Working Group on Culture and expressed hope that the forthcoming meeting of the WG on Culture taking place during Mittelfest event would bring new initiatives such as the International Writers meeting at Vilenica and the Seminar on Theatre and Performing Arts in the Central European area with the aim of activating a network of theatre festivals.

The Ministers noted with appreciation the award of a special CEI prize in the Premio Trio di Trieste Chamber Music international competition, which was held from 25 to 31 May 1998 in Trieste. The special prize, won this year by young artists from Macedonia, will be dedicated for participants from CEI countries at this prestigious annual competition.

22. The Ministers took note of the activities within the framework of the Working Group on Science and Technology. They noted with satisfaction progress achieved in the programme of geodetic and cartographic co-operation by the full implementation of the CERGOP project and plans for its continuation in Phase 2. They also expressed their conviction that the CESAR project will be continued within the CEI framework in possible partnership with the European Space Agency which would contribute to further development of scientific and industrial activities in the countries involved.

23. The Ministers recognised that reaching high quality of human resources is one of the key factors for the success of economic transformation and European integration. The

Ministers welcomed the efforts of the Working Group on Human Resource Development and Training aimed at transferring and exchanging of know-how experiences.

The Ministers appreciated the financial support provided by Austria, the Czech Republic and Italy for the projects as well as an additional contribution from the CEI/EBRD to be used for projects already approved for 1998. They also recognised the financial contribution of the Czech Republic for the participation of the least advanced member countries in two conferences on Vocational Education and Training Reform. The Ministers further appreciated the co-operation proposals of Poland in the field of social policy and internationalisation of labour markets in the light of the European integration. They recommended to the Working Group to prepare projects for 1999-2000 period focused in particular on European integration issues in line with European Commission proposals aimed at improving co-operation between the CEI and the EU.

The Ministers appreciated the offer of the Italian Government to organise a training course for young professionals working in the field of international relations from the CEI Member States to be held at the United World College of the Adriatic in Duino in 1998. They expressed their opinion that the College of Duino could represent an additional point of reference in educational activities of the CEI.

The Ministers welcomed that five CEI workshops have been organised by IDLI since the Sarajevo Summit in co-operation with institutions in Bulgaria, Hungary, Macedonia, Czech Republic, and Romania. This programme is supported by the Secretariat for CEI Projects at the EBRD in co-operation with EBRD's Legal Transition Team working on legal reforms in CEI countries.

24. The Ministers encouraged the revitalisation of the Working Group on Energy and the development of further co-operation among the Member States in the energy field.

25. The Ministers noted with appreciation the activities of the CEI in the field of promoting the development of small and medium sized enterprises in the Member States. They welcomed the recent initiatives in this field, in particular the CEI Conference held in Sofia in May 1998 organised in support of the Bulgarian privatisation process; the UN ECE Conference held in Geneva in May 1998 dealing in particular with best financing practices and the conference organised by Croatia in Pula in June 1998 on the role of local administration in promoting small and medium enterprise development as well as on the establishment of a project on observatory for SME proposed by the Working Group on SME.

26. The Ministers reconfirmed the particular interest of Member States in the area of trans-European transport networks. They encouraged the CEI bodies to explore the possibilities for concrete co-operation in this field. In this context, they encouraged the full implementation of the initiative of the CEI - Executive Secretariat to complement the work undertaken by the TINA Secretariat in Vienna with respect to non-PHARE Member States.

The Ministers encouraged the activities concerning Corridor VIII, as well as an early finalisation of the Memorandum of Understanding and its implementation.

27. The Ministers appreciated the development of the technical co-operation programme for agriculture wholesale markets organised by the Secretariat for CEI Projects at the EBRD and the WG on Agriculture. A CEI Foundation has been set up in order to promote and implement this programme with participation of Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Romania. They have noted that CEI financial assistance has been arranged for the design of several wholesale market facilities in Croatia.

28. The Ministers expressed their satisfaction with the progress made by the Secretariat for CEI Projects at the EBRD in the implementation of specific projects included in the Plan of Action, in particular:

- assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina in the reconstruction of the electrical power system where the CEI engineering assistance will continue with support from the European Commission fund at the EBRD;
- assistance to Sarajevo Airport where the CEI supported services for the development of a Master Plan have been arranged in co-operation with the Airport of Milan;
- recovery of the economy of Albania where three projects have been identified: supply of electricity for Tirana; Durrës Industrial Park and road sections on Corridor VIII;
- assistance to Belarus where the training of agricultural managers from Gomel region has started with a programme of study visits in the Czech Republic;
- Pan-European Transport Corridor V where the development of the management/accounting system for air navigation in Ukraine has started using CEI- funded experts;
- computer networks where the CEInet, BOLDnet and CECCI systems developments offer a stronger opportunity for the private sector involvement in the CEI activities.

The Ministers recognised the necessity of intensifying efforts to transform the CEI initiatives into bankable projects corresponding to the criteria and procedures used by international financial institutions.

29. The Ministers welcomed the project of the CEI Business Forum to be held on the occasion of the next CEI Summit in Zagreb, as well as the meeting of the Investment Promotion Agencies of the CEI Member States scheduled to be organised in Croatia in autumn 1998. They recognised that the improved flow of information on economic, legal and commercial issues will promote the development of regional trade and investment links.

30. The Ministers expressed satisfaction with the full utilisation of the CEI Fund, entrusted to the EBRD, in financing projects and programmes from the Plan of Action. They welcomed the decision of the Italian Government to replenish the CEI Italian Fund at the EBRD in order to guarantee the pursuance of related activities.

In view of accelerating the implementation of the goals and objectives defined in the “Sarajevo Declaration” and in the Plan of Action, the Ministers invited the Member States to consider the possibility of making available supplementary financial resources through the co-financing of relevant CEI projects, and voluntary contributions to the special Solidarity Fund to be established at the CEI - Executive Secretariat in Trieste.

The Ministers announced the decision to transfer to Trieste the Head of the Secretariat for CEI Projects at the EBRD. This operational body of the CEI will remain an integral part of the EBRD, but will utilise the logistic advantages of Trieste to strengthen the links with CEI countries.

31. The Ministers noted with appreciation the activities of the CEI - Executive Secretariat in Trieste. They welcomed the appointment of two Deputy Directors from Slovenia and Italy respectively, the secondment of a science and technology attaché to the CEI - Executive Secretariat and the financial support provided by the host country.

Relations with international organisations and third countries

32. The Ministers welcomed the further strengthening of co-operation of the CEI with the Council of Europe. They expressed their satisfaction with the meeting of the CEI Financial Committee and a representative of the Council of Europe, held in Trieste in April 1998, where further co-operation in already identified areas was discussed.

The Ministers also expressed their support to Bosnia and Herzegovina’s application for membership in the Council of Europe in view of promoting democracy, rule of law, human rights and of assisting Bosnia and Herzegovina to achieve sustainable stability.

33. The Ministers exchanged their views on co-operation between the CEI and the OSCE. They appreciated the CEI participation in the election monitoring in Moldova and Ukraine, and in this context, they reiterated the CEI readiness to continue such activities of good services in future. They also appreciated the organisation of a special Training Course on Election Monitoring held at the University of Pisa, and the consequent establishment of the CEI Election Monitoring Pool.

The Ministers expressed their hope that the OSCE will be able to finish as soon as possible its work on the platform for co-operative security within the Document Charter on European Security which could provide the CEI and other regional groupings with a valuable framework for their interactions with the OSCE.

They also appreciated the activities of Poland as the OSCE Chairman-in-Office in 1998, especially those aimed at finding an appropriate framework for the peaceful settlement of the Kosovo question and at stabilising the region.

34. The Ministers encouraged closer co-operation between the CEI and the OECD, also through regular contacts between the two organisations, in particular with regard to proposals for organising meetings of small and medium sized enterprise development agencies and the promotion of women entrepreneurship in transition economies. They

hope that SIGMA Programme will also contribute to the co-operation with the CEI countries namely in the sphere of public management. The Ministers recognised that the meetings of the representatives of the Paris Missions to the OECD of Austria, Italy, Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland can contribute to the development of co-operation of the CEI and the OECD.

35. The Ministers further welcomed the conclusion on 27 May 1998 of the Memorandum of Understanding between the CEI and the UN ECE, providing for a new impetus for the strengthening of co-operation between the two institutions, and establishing a proper legal framework thereof. They noted with appreciation the enhanced co-operation with the UN ECE through the establishment of the CEI funded "Focal Point" in Geneva and expressed interest in promoting systematic co-operation in order to implement projects of common interest.

36. The Ministers exchanged views on CEI relations with other regional groupings and initiatives in Europe. They requested the Committee of National Co-ordinators, the CEI - Executive Secretariat and the interested Working Groups to take the necessary steps to intensify such contacts in order to select activities and projects for joint implementation.

37. The Ministers noted with satisfaction that the new forms of co-operation between the diplomatic missions of the CEI Member States has been developing in many capitals through meetings organised jointly by Croatia and Italy in the course of the first half of this year, contributing to increased visibility of the CEI, and resulting in some relevant suggestions for the CEI activities.

38. The Ministers welcomed the development of the co-operation of the CEI with the Russian Federation in the field of combating organised crime and illegal migration. They recommended to the co-chairmen of the WG on Combating Organised Crime to invite the Minister of Interior of the Russian Federation as observer or special guest at the Meeting of Ministers of Interior of the CEI Member States to be held in Trieste in October 1998. They reaffirmed their interest in co-operation with Russian Federation in the fields of combating organised crime and combating illegal migration.

39. Welcoming the enhanced co-operation between the parliamentary and executive bodies of the CEI, the Ministers took note with interest of the conclusions and recommendations expressed by the CEI Parliamentary Committee in its Final Document adopted at the meeting in Cavtat on 25-26 May 1998.

40. The Ministers expressed their gratitude to the Government of Croatia for the excellent organisation of the Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the CEI countries at Brijuni.