



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

Karlovy Vary, 24 June 1999

### Final Document

1. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Central European Initiative (CEI) held their annual meeting in Karlovy Vary on 24 June 1999. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Jan Kavan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, CEI Chairman-in-Office for the year 1999.

2. The Meeting 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 also attended by the representatives of the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE), and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in their capacity as Special Guests.

Amb. Wolfgang Petritsch, Special Envoy of the EU, attended the meeting as guest of the Chairman-in-Office.

The meeting was further attended by the representative of the Parliamentary Dimension of the CEI, by the Director General of the CEI - Executive Secretariat and the Head of the Secretariat for CEI Projects at the EBRD.

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3. The Ministers had an in-depth discussion on the latest political, economic and security developments in Europe, especially those affecting the CEI region.

4. The Ministers expressed deep satisfaction that the Kosovo crisis which had been caused by unacceptable ethnic intolerance and systematic ethnic cleansing had been brought to an end, thus re-establishing concrete hopes for a stabilisation in multiethnic Kosovo and in the whole region. In this context, the Ministers stressed the importance of respecting and, where necessary, restoring the rights of all persons belonging to all national minorities and ethnic groups in Yugoslavia, as enshrined in the relevant international documents.

In this context, the delegations of Hungary and Croatia drew special attention to the situation of minorities in Vojvodina and Sandjak. Furthermore, the delegation of Bulgaria drew special attention to the situation of the Bulgarian national minority in Dimitrovgrad-Bosilegrad, the delegation of Albania to Albanians in the Southern part of Serbia and the delegation of Macedonia drew special attention to Macedonians living in Yugoslavia.

Considering the negative impact the Kosovo issue had and continues to have on the entire region until all conditions can be met for a solution of the humanitarian crisis, for an economic regeneration of the countries most affected and for lasting peace and stability in the region, the Ministers decided to issue a special “Statement on Kosovo”, reflecting their common approach to the issue.

5. The Ministers highly appreciated and regarded as crucial the role of Albania and Macedonia and their contribution to the solution of the Kosovo crisis and the preservation of stability in the area.

The Ministers stressed the need for fair burden sharing and for urgent financial assistance to Albania, Macedonia and other affected countries in the region. They underlined the importance of the safe and free return of all refugees and displaced persons under the supervision of the UNHCR.

The Ministers appreciated the contribution of individual CEI Member States for standing up to the humanitarian crisis and urged them to support the economic recovery programme for Albania.

6. The Ministers highly appreciated the launching of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe by the EU which offers a new comprehensive and inclusive framework for international efforts aimed at stabilising South Eastern Europe by fostering democracy, economic development, security and, on an individual basis, integration in Euro-Atlantic structures. They welcomed the important role that in this context is envisaged for the CEI. The Ministers confirmed the readiness of the CEI and its Member States to actively participate in this process and to contribute constructively to the achievement of the Stability Pact objectives. In this context they considered the need for the possible creation of an appropriate implementation mechanism in the framework of the CEI and directed the CNC to establish the required modalities taking into account the primary role of the most affected Member States.

They adopted a separate document outlining the CEI position in this matter.

7. The Ministers reaffirmed that the CEI strategy of cohesion in Europe and of solidarity with member countries which are in particular need of assistance shall be pursued and further developed in order to assist in particular the less developed countries of the region in their efforts to reach the European political, economic and social standards and to advance their integration, on an individual basis, into European and Euro-Atlantic structures. They noted that the effective implementation of this strategy depends on a lasting commitment of the countries concerned to continued democratic and economic reforms.

8. The Ministers stressed the importance and determining impact of the EU and NATO enlargement and co-operation policies on the security, stability and economic prosperity of all countries in Europe. In accordance with the objectives of the CEI, Member States will pursue efforts aimed at avoiding the emergence of new dividing lines

in Europe. They welcomed and supported the objectives of the Budapest Declaration adopted to this effect by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe at its 104<sup>th</sup> session.

9. The Ministers confirmed the interest of the CEI in further developing relations with the EU/EC and expressed the readiness of the Member States to develop contacts and co-operation at all levels. They expressed their conviction that possibilities exist for concrete co-operation and projects on the basis of the relevant documents exchanged between the EU/EC and the CEI. In this context they welcomed the EU decision for launching a new Stabilisation and Association process with the countries in South and Eastern Europe which have not yet concluded Association Agreements taking into account the individual situation of each country, with a perspective of full integration into the EU structures. In this respect they welcomed the EU General Affairs Council conclusions of 21<sup>st</sup> June 1999.

10. The CEI members of NATO and a substantial number of other CEI Member States underlined NATO's key role in providing peace and stability in Europe particularly in South Eastern Europe and endorsed NATO's new Strategic Concept. They considered the accession of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to NATO as a crucial step to remove Europe's Cold War division. They also expressed support for the intensification of co-operation between the Alliance and CEI Member States and in that regard particularly underlined the significance of the Membership Action Plan envisaged as a "road map" to membership for the aspirant countries.

11. The Ministers recognised the comprehensive role of OSCE in fostering security and stability in the region and reaffirmed the readiness of the CEI to strengthen the co-operation between the CEI and the OSCE, particularly in all fields of post-conflict rehabilitation.

12. The Ministers underlined the importance of protecting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities as an organic part of respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms as defined in the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. They pledged to continue the CEI co-operation in this field, as a factor for promoting mutual understanding and confidence, democracy, peace, justice, security and stability in the region. In this context, they noted that the CEI Instrument for the Protection of Minority Rights, which is entering its fifth year of existence, has been signed by eleven CEI Member States and remains open for signature.

13. The Ministers called for the accelerated implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the principles of equal rights and obligations of all three constituent peoples. The Ministers also called for the speedy and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons in safety and dignity, for a reform of the media and an educational system encouraging inter-ethnic harmony, the implementation of an independent and professional juridical system and the full functioning of the joint State institutions as well as human rights institutions.

14. The Ministers noted the approach of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, envisaging that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will be welcome as a full and equal participant in the Stability Pact, following the political settlement of the Kosovo crisis

on the basis of the principles agreed by the G8 and taking into account the need for respect by all participants for the principles and objectives of this Pact.

In this context the Ministers noted the intention of the participants of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe to include the Republic of Montenegro, as constituent Republic of the FRY, as an early beneficiary of the Pact.

The Ministers mandated the CNC to consider the possibilities of co-operation with the democratically elected government of Montenegro in CEI programmes and projects for which it will express its interest.

The Ministers noted that the political settlement of the Kosovo crisis and a democratisation process in the FRY would open the way to its participation in the Central European Initiative, upon application as one of the successor States of the SFRY.

15. The Ministers called for full implementation of the decisions of the Lisbon 1996 OSCE Summit and Oslo 1998 OSCE Ministerial Meeting on the overall political settlement to the conflict of the Eastern region of the Republic of Moldova on the basis of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country as well as on early, orderly and complete withdrawal of Russian troops from the Republic of Moldova.

The Ministers called for re-invigorating the negotiations on the status of the Eastern region of the Republic of Moldova. In this respect they decided to send a CEI Troika fact-finding mission to the Republic of Moldova.

16. The Ministers appreciated the Meeting of the Political Directors of the Ministries for Foreign Affairs held in Skopje on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1999 under the co-chairmanship of the Czech Republic and Macedonia. The results of the discussion are reflected in the documents adopted in this meeting.

17. The Ministers expressed their deep concern about the frequent violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law in situations of armed conflict and, recalling the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the four Geneva Conventions and the Centennial of the first International Peace Conference in The Hague, affirmed the continuing need to respect and ensure respect for the established humanitarian rules as well as human rights standards. The Ministers expressed their support for the early establishment of the International Criminal Court.

### **The CEI Plan of Action 1998-1999, implementation and progress**

18. The Ministers appreciated the efforts of the Czech Presidency and the CNC to increase the efficiency of the CEI work and to carry out the restructuring of the system of working groups. They noted with satisfaction the results of the Trieste Conference on CEI Co-operation initiated by the CEI - Executive Secretariat. They also noted with appreciation the enlarged role of the CEI - Executive Secretariat in co-ordinating the activities of the Working Groups in assisting them in preparation and implementation of their programmes.

19. The Ministers underlined the importance of the development of the Pan-European transport corridors. They encouraged the competent CEI bodies to assist in promoting

bankable projects in this field in co-ordination with the EU/EC and international financial institutions.

20. The Ministers expressed satisfaction with the progress made by the CEI Working Groups, in particular:

- In the field of transport, an enhanced co-operation with the EC has been launched by complementing the technical activities of PHARE in non-PHARE CEI countries;
- In the area of civil protection, substantial progress has been made in extending the co-operation mechanism related to natural and technological disasters, and in organising a training course on this subject in Italy;
- The Sub-group on Environment and Transport has further developed the objectives and projects of the CEI Declaration on Environmentally Sustainable Transport, by publications and international meetings;
- For the promotion and support of SMEs, a number of activities have been organised by the WG, particularly dealing with the improvement of the legal environment for SME development, also in view of harmonisation with EU regulations.
- In the area of combating organised crime, the Working Group has developed a number of activities related to the Trieste Declaration adopted by the Ministers of the Interior in 1998;
- In the field of human resource development and training a variety of seminars, workshops and training courses were organised.
- Further progress has been achieved in the geodetic and geodynamic programmes which now require further support by the competent national institutions, i.a. by reserving and allocating indispensable funds for projects realised in the framework of these programmes;
- In the area of youth exchange, a number of international activities have been initiated by the Working Group;

21. They appreciated the progress achieved by the Secretariat for CEI Projects at the EBRD in connection with the CEI contribution to investment projects and international events, using the CEI Fund at the EBRD recently replenished by Italy. They noted with satisfaction several CEI contributions to investment projects in co-operation with the EBRD, in particular:

- the reconstruction and improvement of Sarajevo Airport, for which the CEI has provided a master plan for long term development, and a contribution for the purchase of airport equipment;
- engineering design and work supervision for the construction of five agricultural wholesale markets in Croatia,
- a management and accounting system for the utilisation of Air Navigation equipment recently installed in Ukraine;
- design and procurement assistance for electricity distribution in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- preparations for CEI investment co-financing for the East-West road Corridor 8 in Albania.

The Ministers also expressed satisfaction with several CEI international events, training and other services organised by the Secretariat for CEI Projects, in particular:

- the preparation of a CEI Business Advisory Service, to start in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Slovenia;
- a micro-financing programme for Albania to assist families and small enterprises in areas affected by the refugee crisis;
- commercial law training in several CEI countries;
- agricultural management training in Belarus and Czech Republic;
- a Macro-economic policy Seminar in Croatia;
- further development of CEI computer networks for CEI information and for the promotion of SMEs projects in CEI countries;
- the establishment of a Wholesale Market Foundation under the presidency of Poland, with initial participation of Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary and Romania, and a technical co-operation plan also involving other CEI countries.

22. The Ministers welcomed the preparation and implementation of the November Summit Economic Forum in Prague with the main objective of promoting investments in the CEI region. They expressed the conviction that the Summit Economic Forum represents a significant achievement in the framework of the CEI economic dimension and encouraged an active participation of member countries and the international business community in this event.

23. The Ministers recognised the importance of two initiatives within the co-operation between the CEI and the OECD: the promotion of women's entrepreneurship in CEI countries, and the development of industrial districts and networks of SMEs.

These areas can have a major impact in the transition process and in the economic activity of wide social strata, and lend themselves to the transfer of experience and technology between CEI countries.

24. The Ministers appreciated the strengthening of co-operation between the UN/ECE and the CEI and noted that an enhanced co-operation will continue on the basis of the Memorandum of Understanding and on the results of the CEI-UN/ECE consultations which took place in Geneva, May 1999, which identified several concrete projects for co-operation (gender issues and women advancement, real estate markets opportunities, best practices in business incubators, dissemination centre for enterprise development, standards in fresh fruit and vegetables and investment projects for organic agriculture). A close CEI-UN/ECE co-operation is again being envisaged at the CEI Summit Economic Forum in Prague in November 1999.

25. The Ministers directed the CEI structures to take initiatives for strengthening co-operation with the Council of Europe, particularly in the sectors which were identified as of interest to both organisations at the meeting between a CEI delegation and representatives of the Council of Europe, held in Strasbourg on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1998.

The Ministers invited the CNC and the CEI-ES to ensure close co-operation with the Council of Europe in these fields within the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

The Ministers expressed their conviction that the process of accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Council of Europe can be accelerated for the sake of the integration of the whole of the country with its constituent elements into European co-operation structures.

26. The Ministers appreciated the recent co-ordination meetings held in Vienna and Rome between the regional co-operation initiatives, CEI, BSEC, Royaumont Process, SECI and SEECP. They supported their efforts of creating synergies in their respective work-programmes in view of enhancing their role in the region and within the framework of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

In this context the Ministers support the application of Moldova for membership in the Royaumont Process.

### **Decisions**

27. The Ministers mandated the Presidency and the CNC to immediately start the preparation of the new Plan of Action 2000-2001 reflecting the new developments in the region, in particular the implementation of the Stability Pact.

28. The Ministers mandated the Troika to undertake a fact-finding mission to the Republic of Moldova based on the mandate as follows:

- 1) studying and evaluating the state of affairs as regards the withdrawal of Russian troops, armament, military equipment and ammunition from the Eastern region of the Republic of Moldova;
- 2) exploring on the spot possibilities for a CEI contribution to the solution of the Transnistrian conflict;
- 3) stimulating and supporting direct talks between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and local authorities of Tiraspol on the status of the region;
- 4) providing information on the issue to CEI Member States and to other interested international organisations and fora, especially the OSCE and the EU.

The Mission, headed by a senior Czech official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, shall be despatched in Autumn 1999 and shall report to the CEI Summit in Prague.

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29. The Ministers welcomed the co-operation of Parliaments and took note of the results of the meeting of the CEI Parliamentary Committee in Prague, 7-8 June 1999.

30. The Ministers expressed their gratitude to the Government of the Czech Republic for the excellent organisation of the Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the CEI countries at Karlovy Vary.