



CEI Summit

Vienna, 24 November 2014

Declaration of Heads of Government on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Establishment of the CEI

We, the Heads of Government of the Member States of the Central European Initiative (CEI), gathered in Vienna on 24 November 2014, to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the CEI,

Recalling the wave of historical changes that began in Central Europe in the Spring of 1989, tore down the Iron Curtain which had been dividing the continent since 1945 and brought freedom to the people in the region triggering off democratic transformation,

Recognising, in this context, the importance of the establishment of the "Quadrangone" in Budapest on 11 November 1989 by Austria, Hungary, Italy and Yugoslavia for the development of a political dialogue and for widening a manifold cooperation among the countries,

Evoking that this newly created Initiative has rapidly expanded and grown into the largest intergovernmental forum for regional cooperation in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, thus changing its name into Central European Initiative,

Acknowledging that the Initiative has taken an active part in the continued changes, supporting the EU Enlargement process, fostering the Eastern Partnership policy as well as reacting to dramatic developments in the region,

Reaffirming, in this regard, the commitment promoting full respect for the principles of international law contained in the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and other bilateral and multilateral international treaties and to safeguard the sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity of its Member States,

Recognising that today, with its eighteen Member States, the CEI can look back at an impressive record, having contributed to a greater unity of Europe, promoting a Europe without dividing lines, sharing common values and having accompanied from the very outset the process of transition to pluralistic democracies and market economies as well as of European integration,

Expressing high appreciation to the Italian Government, for being the main contributor to the CEI operations and activities over the years, in particular for hosting and financing the Executive Secretariat, established in Trieste in 1996, and for creating and supporting the CEI Fund at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the largest and single institutional investor in the Region, in London since 1992, in support of Technical Cooperation and the Know-how Exchange Programme (KEP Italy),

Expressing also high appreciation to Austria, the second largest contributor to the CEI, for the substantial support both for financing the Know-how Exchange programme (KEP Austria) and for leading, over the years, the Executive Secretariat together with Italy,

Taking note of the many cooperation initiatives of the countries which have contributed to fostering mutual trust and understanding, in particular of the activities supported through the CEI Cooperation Fund established in 2001, provided by all Member States,

Acknowledging the important role the Executive Secretariat has played in the course of the years, with the aim of providing a systematic approach to the CEI's wide-spread activities, consistently stepping up technical assistance to Member States and launching specialised programmes and projects in response to the perceived needs in the Region,

Reviewing the current political and economic developments in the region and the potential future role of the CEI:

- Reaffirm the validity of the CEI, the oldest and largest Central European Organisation, and confirm the commitment to it as an essential platform for supporting European integration through a strengthened cooperation between and among its Member States;
- Underline the focus of the CEI on supporting all non-EU CEI Member States, including those voicing their European aspirations, to strengthen and further develop their relations and partnerships with the EU;
- Welcome the progress made by the non-EU CEI Member States on the European path, and express full support for deepening the relationship with the EU of all CEI countries committed to this path and call upon their authorities to continue implementing the necessary reforms;
- Reiterate the need for intensified efforts to promote democracy, human rights and functional market economies as key pre-requisites for European integration;
- Welcome the role the CEI has recently assumed as a bridge between the EU macro and other regions and look forward to a strengthened cooperation with the Eastern Partnership;
- Note with great satisfaction the growing cooperation with other regional organisations through various forms of collaboration, including Memoranda of Understanding, thus fostering positive synergies among the stakeholders;
- Underline the need to further explore the possibility for enhanced cooperation with the United Nations (UN) and its relevant agencies making use of the Observer Status in the UN General Assembly;
- Underline the importance of the respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all CEI Member States;
- Stress the importance of the CEI as a forum for political dialogue accompanied by a strong project-oriented dimension fostering the development of institutional capacities (capacity building), promoting people-to-people contacts and enhancing economic growth;
- Highlight the need to continue to take full advantage of the inter-governmental structures ensuring a member-driven decision making process;
- Welcome the efforts to further strengthen the second and third pillars of CEI cooperation, i.e. the Parliamentary and the Business Dimensions;
- Underline the necessity to step up efforts to clear the regulatory and infrastructural bottlenecks hampering closer economic interactions and more extensive human contacts in the Region;
- Continue to reaffirm an increased involvement of the CEI with civil society;
- Appreciate the commitment to reaching an improved cooperation with the European Union and its institutions, the European Commission, the European External Action Service and the European Parliament;
- Attach great importance to the CEI Fund at the EBRD and the outstanding results it has achieved so far;
- Encourage the EBRD to maintain its support to the economies of its existing CEI countries of operation;
- Acknowledge the important results of the CEI KEP as a tailor-made instrument supporting European integration;
- Commend the results of the CEI Cooperation Fund which have contributed to increasing mobility in the Region;
- Welcome the greater attention to funding opportunities offered by the EU and the growing involvement of the CEI in EU-funded projects;
- Reiterate the need to improve, gradually, the financial contributions to the CEI activities and projects;
- Recognise the importance of cooperation in the fields of transport, environmental protection and energy as essential elements for sustainable development; of research and innovation, education and information society as essential elements towards a knowledge-based economy and of intercultural cooperation and media towards an inclusive society, according to the priorities outlined in the CEI Plans of Action;
- Appreciate the quick response to emergency situations, such as the devastating floods in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia;
- Appreciate also the efforts of the Executive Secretariat in securing overall visibility of the CEI;
- Look forward to a continued use of CEI's potential and capacity to advance the European integration process and build a Europe without dividing lines.