

PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN INITIATIVE

PARLIAMENTARY DIMENSION

Vienna, 17 – 19 November 2014

FINAL DECLARATION

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Central European Initiative Parliamentary Dimension,

Remembering historic events that have deeply changed Europe, if not the world: notably the start of World War I 100 years ago and the fall of the Iron Curtain 25 years ago;

Proudly looking back at 25 years of fruitful regional cooperation and achievements within the CEI, one of the first regional intergovernmental fora in Europe encompassing countries of different political, economic and social background at that time;

Aware of the fact that the CEI has to prove its added value on a constant basis in an environment consisting of many different forms of regional cooperation, different aspirations within its Member States as well as unforeseeable geopolitical challenges;

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

Reiterating the principle of freedom of sovereign countries in terms of political and economic choices, thereby firmly condemning the illegal annexation of parts of other sovereign countries;

Congratulating Ukraine on the recent national elections, rejecting the so called elections in some eastern provinces, and firmly hoping that the country will soon be able to embark on a path of national reconciliation, peace and prosperity, without any further attempts by Russia to create instability and to jeopardise a peaceful solution to the crisis;

Commending the EU Heads of State and Governments for endorsing the new EU

Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) at their last summit at the end of October 2014 and looking forward to an ever closer cooperation between the CEI and the macro-regional strategies;

Recalling the final document adopted by the CEI-PD Parliamentary Committee on 10-12 June 2014 in Vienna;

Welcoming the resolution adopted by the General Committee on Economic Affairs at its sessions in Bucharest, 8-9 October 2014 (see Annex);

25 Years Central European Initiative

Acknowledges the crucial and successful role the CEI has played in the past 25 years in fostering cohesion and integration within its Member States, many of whom have in the meantime become Member States of the European Union;

Underlines that the manifold activities carried out within the CEI have directly contributed to a better mutual understanding amongst its Member States;

Strongly emphasizes the importance of the CEI as a forum promoting the further enlargement of the EU and as a strong partner in fostering regional integration and macro-regional cooperation in Europe;

Fully supports the membership ambitions of its Western Balkan Member States, aware of the fact that many challenges still lie ahead, determined and willing to support these ambitions wherever possible;

Takes note of the progress the Republic of Moldova has made on the European path, marked among others by the achievement of a visa-free travel regime and the signature and subsequent application of the Association Agreement with the European Union, which includes a free trade component;

Expresses support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and free choice of the Republic of Moldova for deepening the relationship with the EU and call upon the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to continue implement the necessary reforms required within the framework of the Association Agreement;

Stresses the necessity for the CEI to achieve tangible and value-added results in its activities and therefore welcomes the CEI-Plan of Action 2014-2016 and supports attempts to provide more resources to the CEI-Secretariat despite the difficult economic environment;

Calls upon the institutions of the EU and other international organisations to cooperate closely with the CEI in helping countries to achieve EU-standards and in enhancing the effectiveness of macro-regional strategies;

Underlines that a further step towards a more effective integration and co-operation policy of CEI member states can be implemented by means of an effective infrastructure, transportation and communications strategy; that all this requires a convincing common policy of the European Union and CEI member states as well as

consistent European financial schemes aimed at funding the above-mentioned plans; furthermore, this strategy can be useful to promote economic growth and a better European sentiment throughout Europe;

Welcomes the fact that the CEI has acquired expertise in administering EU projects and EU funds and that it is becoming a valuable institution for implementing EU projects;

Calls upon all CEI Member States to contribute to the budget according to the best of their abilities and to promote the expertise and possibilities that the CEI has to offer in all their international contacts, thereby further increasing its visibility;

Acknowledges the need to further strengthen the coordination between the different components of the CEI, namely the parliamentary and the governmental components, in order to streamline activities and to achieve maximum impact;

Supports the ambition to strengthen the Business Dimension of the CEI as a further tool to promote regional cooperation, to increase the competitiveness of SMEs and as an opportunity to attract private funds;

CEI-Agenda 2014 to 2016

Highlights that much has been achieved within the CEI over the past period from 2010 to 2013 and commends all involved actors, namely the respective presidencies and the CEI-Secretariat for their efforts;

Supports the CEI Plan of Action 2014 to 2016 as a concise and ambitious tool to streamline and focus the activities of the CEI and supports the strong links to EU-policies;

Believes that in today's fast paced world knowledge is more than ever the key to sustainable competitiveness and prosperity;

Stresses that the exchange of best practices in the field of education should play a crucial role within the CEI as school systems have a lasting impact on all subsequent stages of learning and training;

Calls upon all relevant stakeholders from universities to research organisations to industry to become active in bi- and multilateral projects and to exchange and share knowledge for the common benefit;

Acknowledges the importance of further deepening cooperation in the field of research and innovation in order to raise awareness of new technologies in all CEI Member States;

Strongly supports any measures that help disadvantaged groups, in particular to find employment or possibilities for further education and learning, thereby increasing opportunities and solidarity within societies;

Points out that youth guarantee schemes and vocational training can be the right

answer to high unemployment rates amongst young people and that the exchange of best practices as well as the quest for additional funds needs to be intensified;

Calls upon the CEI Member States to promote gender policies with regard to women's employment - by supporting the reconciling of professional, family and private life - and with regard to combating violence against women - by requesting Member States to underwrite and ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, made in Istanbul on 11 May 2011;

Expresses its full support for the incoming Macedonian CEI Presidency, convinced that all dimensions of the CEI will further gain in importance and visibility in the course of 2015.