



**Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs
of the Member States of the Central European Initiative**
Sofia, 7 November 2022

Background Paper

"A united CEI region in support of Ukraine and addressing the wider ramifications of the war"

The Russian war against Ukraine brings about an immense loss of lives and a huge humanitarian and economic toll on the country, causing ripple effects across the entire CEI region. Numerous sectors, such as energy, food industry, agriculture and healthcare are exposed to mounting disruptions in the supply chains. The everyday lives of citizens are directly affected by economic hardships, uncertainty of energy supplies, spikes in energy prices and rising inflation, coupled with increased security risks, including the risk of nuclear escalation. In parallel, our countries are dealing with the challenges of hybrid war. This situation may have far-reaching geopolitical consequences.

With no solution in sight, the instruments of regional cooperation could be helpful in mitigating the impact of the war on Ukraine and across the region. With Ukraine being a CEI Member under military aggression and the rest of the Members being geographically situated in the vicinity of the war, the CEI is particularly interested in pursuing coordinated initiatives to address these unprecedented challenges.

In recent years the CEI has been showing remarkable unity and resilience to crises, as well as capacity to swiftly put forward solutions, building upon solidarity and cooperation. The immediate political and financial support to Ukraine, provided in the early days of the war, confirmed this trend. The informal discussion of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs in New York paved the way to new initiatives to provide further support to Ukraine and to vigorously pursue the European integration project as a key priority and an integral part of CEI's response to the current challenges. Now that the CEI Member States are either EU Members or aspire to join the EU, the Organisation has become even more consolidated.

Against this backdrop, the meeting in Sofia presents an opportunity for the Ministers to send a message of unity and deepening solidarity through their exchange of ideas on providing further support to Ukraine; pursuing regional measures to enhance connectivity and stabilise supply chains; supporting young people and groups particularly vulnerable to the consequences of the war; furthering European integration; deepening CEI's cooperation with other actors and on other topical matters that could be jointly approached.