



**Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs
of the Member States of the Central European Initiative**
Chişinău, 22 November 2023

Joint Statement

We, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Central European Initiative (CEI) gathered in Chişinău on 22 November 2023 under the topic “Vital contribution of the EU integration process to the peace, stability, security and prosperity in Europe and the role of the Central European Initiative in the process of the EU enlargement”;

Expressing our determination to boost the role of the Central European Initiative to achieve two far-reaching priorities, namely advancing the European integration process and promoting sustainable development of the CEI region;

Reaffirming our commitment to a peaceful, stable and united Europe, with common values and respect for the principles of international law;

Condemning Russia’s continued unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine;

Highlighting the vital contribution of the EU integration process for peace, stability, security and prosperity in Europe;

Underlining our support for the EU integration process of the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the Western Balkans, and acknowledging that the process is based on the principle of own merits, and on the adherence to the established criteria and fundamental European values, as well as on the capacity of these countries to implement the EU-related reforms,

Welcoming the recent European Commission’s positive reports on EU accession candidate countries’ progress in implementing reforms,

Highlighting the transfer of knowledge on European integration issues between EU and non-EU CEI Member States, considered of primary importance and value and vigorously promoted within the CEI;

Engaging in better coordination of sustainable development actions that encourage the implementation of the SDGs;

Emphasizing our synergies with regional organisations and intergovernmental fora, leading to cohesion and solidarity;

Enhancing cooperation in the framework of the CEI, leading to a transformed region with sustainable development as the engine for economic prosperity, environmental quality and social well-being, where inequalities are reduced, and opportunities are created;

1. Respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders;
2. Remain determined to strengthen the international order based on the rule of law, respect for the UN Charter, sovereignty and territorial integrity within the internationally recognized borders of all states, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
3. Call on for immediate and unconditional stop of Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine and withdraw all its armed forces and equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine;
4. Condemn Russia's attempt to legitimize its illegal military control and attempted annexation of parts of Ukraine's territory, particularly through the illegitimate so-called „elections”, which have no legal consequences and will not bring any changes in the international status of Ukrainian territories seized by Russian military forces;
5. Express support to the key principles and objectives of the Peace Formula of President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy in order to ensure the widest possible international support to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for Ukraine, and will continue our intensified diplomatic outreach efforts. Achieving this goal would be a significant contribution to strengthening international peace and security;
6. Emphasizes the need to ensure accountability for the most serious crimes under international law committed on the territory of Ukraine through appropriate, fair and independent investigations and prosecutions at the national or international level, and ensure justice for all victims and the prevention of future crimes;
7. Underline that it is extremely important for the international community to stay united against the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and support the recover projects;
8. Encourage wide participation and support for Ukraine's reconstruction process;
9. Agree on the need to coordinate the response of CEI Member States in addressing the unprecedented challenges linked to the consequences of the war at regional level;

10. Reaffirm our commitments to European values and standards, and to a credible EU membership perspective for all CEI EU candidate countries. Looking forward to positive decisions at the December European Council having at its basis compliance in relevant areas related to the opening and advancement of the accession negotiations with respective countries;
11. Reaffirm the importance for the acceleration of the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, as the appropriate roadmap for pursuing sustainable growth;
12. Resolve to further consolidate the CEI position on regional, international and global level, also taking into account the CEI Observer Status at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA);
13. Call for CEI to enhance cooperation with international and regional stakeholders in areas of mutual interest, such as health, connectivity, transport, education, green energy etc.;
14. Take note of the Joint Statement of the CEI Parliamentary Committee on the impact of war on global energy markets and international energy security;
15. Take into consideration the proposal adopted by the Chairpersons of the Foreign Affairs Committees and of the National Delegations to the Parliamentary Dimension of the CEI Member States, at the Conference held in Trieste on 13 October 2023 under the title “Trieste CEI Platform”, to establish a *Convention for the Strengthening of the Central European Initiative*, as a contribution for reflecting on possible ways for CEI to address current and future challenges, in line with the Rules of Procedure of the respective national parliaments and the CEI Guidelines and Rules of Procedure. In that respect, Albania upcoming Presidency of CEI in January 2024 is committed to organize a side meeting of the Convention at the first CNC meeting;
16. Congratulate the CEI-Executive Secretariat for its proactive approach, aimed at tackling the current challenges through own initiatives, while making good use of CEI’s funds, programs and instruments, approving the budget of the CEI Co-operation Fund for 2024;
17. Encourage the CEI-Executive Secretariat to continue along this way by developing activities, projects and advancing partnerships, in line with the strategic guidance of the CEI Plan of Action 2024-2026, which they endorse;
18. Express appreciation to the Moldovan CEI Presidency throughout a particularly challenging period, including for the organisation of this meeting as well as for the activities aimed at strengthening cooperation with the EU and with other international and regional organisations, in particular the UN and WHO, as well as the Presidency’s stimulating regional cooperation in areas, such as enhanced connectivity, young people, health and local dimension;
19. Extend our support to the Republic of Albania for carrying out the mandate of the CEI Presidency from 1 January to 31 December 2024.