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The Central European Initiative

REPORT

submitted on behalf of the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations
by Mrs Squarcialupi, Rapporteur

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¹ Adopted unanimously by the Committee.

² *Members of the Committee:* Mr Woltjer (Chairman); Lord Russell-Johnston, Mr Eversdijk (Vice-Chairmen); MM Aleffi, Amoruso, de Assis, Mrs Beer, MM Debarge, Erler, Evin, Ghesquière, Mrs Guirado (Alternate: *Arnau Navarro*), Mr Henry, Ms Jones, Mrs Katseli, MM Kollwelter, Legendre, Lummer, Micheloyiannis, Mignon, Niza, Onaindia, Mrs Pulgar, Mr Rodeghiero, Ms Smith, Mrs *Squarcialupi*, Mr Taylor (Alternate: *Vis*), Mrs Terborg.

Associate members: Mrs Kaland, Mr Külahli.

N.B. *The names of those participating in the vote are printed in italics.*

Draft Order
on the Central European Initiative

The Assembly,

- (i) Noting the positive role played by subregional cooperation groupings in strengthening stability and security in Europe;
- (ii) Stressing the political importance of the participation in the activities of these groupings of representatives of their member states' national parliaments;
- (iii) Welcoming the development of cooperation between these institutions and expressing support for the objectives defined at the Monaco Conference on the "Subregional economic cooperation processes – a contribution to the new European architecture";
- (iv) Expressing the wish that the process of enlargement of the European Union and the Atlantic Alliance should not create new dividing lines between the countries of Europe;
- (v) Welcoming the stabilising role played by the Central European Initiative (CEI) in south-eastern Europe and its contribution to the reconstruction process in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- (vi) Emphasising the need to fully implement the peace process of the Dayton Accords within a reasonable timeframe in order to overcome the obstacles to the development of relations between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the one hand, and the European Union, on the other hand;
- (vii) Concerned at the lack of progress in settling the crisis afflicting the province of Kosovo in Serbia,
- (viii) Expressing its support for the action taken by the police forces of WEU states represented within the Multinational Police Advisory Element (MAPE) with a view to stabilising the situation in Albania,
- (ix) Expressing the wish that WEU play an active role in the peace process established by the Dayton Accords, complementing the action taken by SFOR,
- (x) Considering that subregional cooperation in potential crisis areas should be promoted, paying special attention to the region of the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea,

INSTRUCTS ITS PRESIDENTIAL COMMITTEE

1. To express an opinion on the expediency of creating a statutory framework with a view to strengthening relations with subregional interparliamentary assemblies,
2. To express an opinion on the objectives of and practical arrangements for cooperation with the Parliamentary Conference of the CEI on matters of common interest, and in particular on security problems in south-eastern Europe,
3. To include in the register of the Assembly a report on situations of potential crisis in the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea region, the organisation of security in the region and the consequences of regional development for European security;
4. To assess the follow-up given to Order 90 on parliamentary cooperation with the countries of central Europe, Order 96 on the Baltic Assembly and Order 100 on parliamentary cooperation in the Black Sea region.

Explanatory Memorandum

(submitted by Mrs Squarcialupi, Rapporteur)

I. Introduction

1. The Central European Initiative is part of the process of rebuilding central and eastern Europe and the Balkans which began in the late 1980s. The CEI is an organisation for sub-regional political and economic cooperation and today plays an active and indispensable role promoting the development of its member countries and their gradual integration into the organisations for European cooperation, the European Union being the priority goal. With 16 member countries¹ at very different stages of political and economic development, the CEI has had to devise ways of managing their diversity and maintaining its cohesion notwithstanding the problems some of its members have come up against and indeed are still experiencing, especially the successor states of former Yugoslavia.

2. Similarly to other subregional organisations such as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation grouping, the CEI has concentrated on specific activities in the economic, social and environmental fields designed to improve the state of regional infrastructure and create conditions more conducive to economic growth and investment in the member countries. Economic integration is not one of its specific priorities as almost all its members are seeking to draw closer in one way or another to the European Union, the symbol of such integration. As EU members, Austria and Italy provide a link as it were between the two organisations while the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia are on the list drawn up by the Commission of countries qualifying for accession to the EU in the short term.

3. European Union enlargement to take in those countries may help strengthen the CEI's current role provided they remain committed to their CEI partners who are unlikely to join the

EU in the immediate future. In parallel, the CEI plays an active part in the effort to stabilise the Balkans region, in particular through its participation in the reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The working relations it has established with economic and financial organisations such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the EBRD and the OECD, have enabled the CEI to identify needs and implement priority projects, thus making it an important and effective vehicle through which those organisations can channel their activities in the countries of central and eastern Europe and the Balkans.

4. The work of the CEI has therefore become an appreciable factor for stability and security. The political dialogue in which it is engaged also enables it to anticipate disputes that arise for one reason or another between some of its members and to find solutions. This role, which may appear to take second place in official declarations issued by the CEI's executive and parliamentary bodies, is vital when one considers that the situations and views of its member countries cover the entire political spectrum. The organisation therefore contributes to the integration of the central and eastern European and Balkan countries in the process of European construction.

II. The development and structures of the Central European Initiative

1. Origins

5. The Central European Initiative is the outcome of a consultation process begun in 1989 by Austria, Hungary, Italy and Yugoslavia. This development, initially known as the "Quadrangone" was widened in 1990 to include Czechoslovakia, thereby acquiring the name "Pentagone". Initially its aim was to promote economic and cultural cooperation but after the collapse of the socialist regimes of central and eastern Europe in 1989, it came to be viewed as a vehicle for bringing the new democracies closer to those of western Europe.

6. The inaugural summit of the "Pentagone" in August 1990 was attended by the

¹ Albania, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Ukraine.

heads of government of the five founding countries, accompanied by their foreign ministers, and by observers from the European Commission, the World Bank, the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) which had recently been created. In July 1991 Poland joined the cooperation group which expanded to become the "Hexagonale". At a meeting in Venice in November 1991 it was agreed that Austria would take on the Presidency of the organisation in January 1992, instead of Yugoslavia where civil war had broken out.

7. In January 1992 the Hexagonale regional grouping decided to change its name to the Central European Initiative. In March, Slovenia and Croatia were admitted with observer status. Later that year Bulgaria became involved in some aspects of the CEI's work. Following the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in December 1992, the Czech and Slovak Republics became members of the CEI. In July 1993, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) joined the organisation. At a meeting in Warsaw on 6-7 October 1995, the heads of government and foreign ministers of the ten CEI member countries decided that Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine would be admitted as members early in 1996. In that same year Moldova became the sixteenth member of the CEI.

2. Organisation and working methods

8. The Central European Initiative has a ministerial component and a parliamentary dimension. The executive bodies are as follows.

- the heads of government meeting, convened in principle once a year in autumn, takes decisions on the political and economic guidelines for cooperation in the CEI, accession to the Initiative, and on creating, merging and disbanding working groups and other executive bodies,
- the meeting of the ministers for foreign affairs takes decisions on all the basic and specific issues relating to cooperation within the CEI, methods of cooperation, the structure of working groups, administrative and budget questions, contacts with other international organisations and institutions

and political problems concerning the central European region. The Chairman-in-Office is responsible for coordination between meetings. The Presidency rotates according to English alphabetical order with the new Chairman taking office at the start of the calendar year. The Chairman-in-Office is assisted by the former Chairman and the next Chairman and together they form the CEI Troika. The meeting of the ministers for foreign affairs is, in principle, convened once a year in spring;

- the Committee of National Coordinators coordinates CEI activities at national level and among the member states. It meets between the sessions of the heads of government and the ministers for foreign affairs to discuss matters relating to cooperation within the framework of the Initiative and prepare recommendations for the governmental meetings. The National Coordinators, together with the directors representing member states on the Board of Directors of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), form the Steering Committee of the Secretariat for CEI projects at the EBRD,
- the Financial Committee is an advisory body within the Committee of National Coordinators composed of the CEI Troika, Italy, the Secretariat for CEI projects at the EBRD and the CEI Executive Secretariat. The Committee is responsible for questions relating to the technical and financial aspects of CEI activities;
- the CEI Executive Secretariat replaced the Centre for Information and Documentation in 1998.

9. The parliamentary dimension of the CEI is represented by the meeting of the Parliamentary Committee convened once a year in spring, and by the meeting of the Parliamentary Conference which is held once a year in autumn. The Final Declaration of the Parliamentary Conference held in Rome on 10-11 November 1994 states that the meetings of the Parliamentary Committee and the

Parliamentary Conference are to take place at least two weeks before the meetings of the heads of government and of the ministers for foreign affairs. The parliamentary dimension of CEI cooperation is regulated by the "new text of the document on working procedures" adopted by the Parliamentary Committee in Vienna on 14 May 1996.

10. The objectives of parliamentary activity are to strengthen multilateral cooperation among the member states at parliamentary level, establish and deepen partnership structures on the basis of the principles of parliamentary democracy and human rights guarantees, and promote and facilitate the process of reform and transition in central and eastern Europe through collaboration between the countries involved². Member states' parliamentary assemblies can send two delegates to meetings of the Parliamentary Committee: the head of the parliamentary delegation and one other member. The size of delegations to the Parliamentary Conference is calculated on the basis of three delegates for a population of up to 5 million, five delegates for a population of between 5 and 12 million, and seven delegates for a population of more than 12 million.

11. The main topics of the political document or declaration to be adopted by the heads of government or ministers for foreign affairs may be discussed at the parliamentarians' meeting. Parliamentary Conference or Committee meetings may prepare and issue a joint statement which is appended to the political document or declaration by the heads of government or ministers for foreign affairs. Cooperation between the parliamentary and executive bodies is indispensable for the success of projects decided by the CEI whose implementation may require the approval of the national parliaments, for instance in the case of matters with legislative or budget implications.

12. The chairmanship of the Parliamentary Committee and the Parliamentary Conference rotates annually in line with the chairmanship of meetings of the heads of government and of foreign ministers. The head of the parliamentary delegation of the country holding the Presidency

is chairman of the parliamentary bodies of the CEI and chairs the two meetings. Two vice-chairmen are appointed for the Parliamentary Committee and Conference. The two parliamentary meetings are organised by the parliament of the country holding the Presidency. A draft agenda is drawn up by the parliament holding the Chair one month prior to meetings. When preparing the draft agenda, great importance is always attached to topics which are to be discussed at the heads of government and foreign ministers' meetings.

13. *Ad hoc* committees of the Parliamentary Committee or Conference may be set up, sometimes at the suggestion of one or other of the parliamentary delegations. Such committees, which may not consist of more than five members, are responsible for monitoring specific projects carried out by the working groups. *Ad hoc* committees may hold joint meetings with relevant working groups.

14. Alongside the executive and parliamentary bodies, the CEI also has specialist working groups with the following titles:

- Agriculture
- Civil defence
- Culture and Education
- War on Drugs
- Environment
- Information and Media
- Migration, Minorities
- Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia
- Science and Technology
- Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
- Statistics
- Telecommunications
- Tourism
- Transport
- Vocational Training

and the following auxiliary bodies

- the Secretariat for CEI projects at the EBRD, established on the basis of the November 1991 agreement;
- the Centre for Information and Documentation in Trieste whose purpose is to circulate information and to maintain

² "New text of the document on working procedures" adopted by the Parliamentary Committee in Vienna on 14 May 1996.

an archive of CEI documentation. In 1998 the Centre also became the headquarters for the organisation's Executive Secretariat.

III. Relations with other European institutions

15. Since its creation the CEI has developed working relations with other organisations for cooperation in Europe and shares some of their objectives. Exchanging ideas and experience with them helps it to carry out its projects successfully. Moreover such inter-institutional cooperation has led to joint initiatives with the support of organisations such as the European Union, the OSCE and the United Nations, which provide expertise and facilities for implementing specific programmes that help provide a solid basis for stability and security in central and eastern Europe and the Balkans.

1. Cooperation with the European Union

16 CEI-EU relations are based on the "Commission report to the Council on EU cooperation with the Central European Initiative (CEI)" which was drafted by the Commission in response to a request from the Florence European Council and was adopted by the Dublin European Council on 14 December 1996. On 18 February 1997, the CEI National Coordinators and representatives of the Commission met for the first time in Brussels and exchanged information on respective cooperation mechanisms. The Commission explained the major instruments for and methodology of potentially available support and the CEI presented eight cooperation projects: Trans-European Networks, Central European Information Reporting, Reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Market System for Agriculture, SME development/support, Legal Training and Reform, Training and Democracy.

17. The second CEI/EU meeting took place in Brussels on 16 October 1997 when information was exchanged on respective cooperation strategies regarding the central and eastern European countries. The Commission explained its present and future (reformed) cooperation instruments and methodologies for assisting future members in their preparation for EU membership. The CEI offered complementary cooperation in selected areas and underlined the need for special attention to be given to cooperation with non-

candidate countries. The Commission offered cooperation in the transport sector and in the field of reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

18. Several European Council meetings have laid the basis for a comprehensive strategy to boost the process of preparing the associated countries of central and eastern Europe for accession. The followings steps for the promotion of working relations were recommended at these meetings:

- the institutionalisation of CEI-EU relations could be envisaged;
- the idea of creating an "advisory unit (network)" for providing information on all existing EU-cooperation/funding channels should be followed up,
- CEI complementarity for cooperation with the EU should be identified, especially in key areas of interest such as transport, reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina, education and vocational training

2. Cooperation with the OSCE

19 At its meeting in Zagreb on 18-19 September 1997, the Committee of National Coordinators adopted the "Report on development of CEI-OSCE cooperation" with a view to initiating a systematic cooperation relationship with the OSCE. A copy of the report was presented by Ambassador Paul Hartig, Director of the CEI Centre for Information and Documentation, to OSCE Secretary-General, Ambassador Giancarlo Aragona, on the occasion of the Parliamentary Conference on "Subregional economic cooperation processes – a contribution to the new European architecture", organised jointly by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the National Council of Monaco in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, and held in Monaco from 8-10 October 1997.

20 Relations between the CEI and OSCE should be based on the principles of mutual reinforcement, complementarity and non-subordination. It would be advisable to enhance cooperation through the following:

- exchange of information and experience,

- mutual invitations to high-level meetings;
- regional activities under the aegis of the OSCE (including election monitoring and early warning);
- cooperation in areas considered by the OSCE Economic Forum;
- joint consultations on political matters of mutual interest;
- cooperation on humanitarian matters, strengthening democratic institutions and human rights (including minority rights).

The OSCE could act as a forum for interaction with the CEI, *inter alia* by taking the following measures :

- periodic exchange of official documents and other information;
- invitations to observe high-level meetings;
- compilation by the Secretary-General of the OSCE of a list of points of contact;
- invitations to OSCE seminars, fora and other events of interest;
- meetings under the aegis of the OSCE to discuss emerging areas of cooperation between the OSCE and the CEI;
- consideration of the possible involvement of non-governmental regional actors in such cooperation;
- provision of information on the activities of the CEI on the OSCE home page in the Internet.

3. Cooperation with the Council of Europe

21. The Committee of National Coordinators, meeting in Zagreb on 18-19 October 1997, adopted the text of a CEI Message to the 2nd Summit of the Council of Europe, held in Strasbourg on 10-11 October 1997. In the Message the CEI member states offer to take the following steps for the development of mutual relations between the CEI and the Council

- cooperation in elaborating ways and means to combat organised crime;
- cooperation in shaping the European cultural identity, *inter alia* through the

exchange of experience in teaching history,

- regular exchange of information between the Council of Europe and the Central European Initiative, using relevant organisational structures and communication channels;
- mutual participation of representatives of both the Council of Europe and the CEI in high-level meetings as well in as the activities of expert and working groups;
- contribution of the CEI to future regional activities of the Council of Europe, in particular intergovernmental cooperation for the protection of national minorities.

4. Cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

22 The CEI has developed close working relations with the UN Economic Commission for Europe. This cooperation endeavour is part of a wider range of activities designed to promote the emergence of free-market economies in central and eastern Europe and the Balkans and enable them once again to become part of the European and worldwide free-trade movement. To this end the CEI and the UNECE have established regular contacts, one result being that Commission experts take part in the CEI's work and attend meetings of the executive bodies. The United Nations has put forward proposals to strengthen these links:

- country-specific strategies, in order to measure the progress achieved sector by sector by countries with economies in transition and to organise fora on criteria relevant for transition,
- trade and transport facilitation, with the presentation of a regional framework for central Europe;
- investment promotion; the ECE's three major areas for attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) include modernisation of infrastructure, property and construction;
- small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs),
- transport,

- environment; cooperation between the ECE and CEI could be developed in two interrelated aspects: policy design and concrete projects,
- sustainable energy: two project proposals have been presented relating to energy efficiency and environmental security in CEI countries, and security of energy supply,
- the possibility of revitalising the CEI Working Group on Energy could also be considered;
- the ECE and CEI will exchange publications and work programmes, as well as schedules of meetings so as to secure attendance at meetings of mutual interest,
- arrangements will be made for cooperation with CEI working groups and the CEI Centre for Information and Documentation in Trieste with a view to preparing bankable projects in consultation with the EBRD;
- some project proposals will be elaborated by applying CEI-EBRD methodology on Project Opportunity Pipeline, they will also contain provisions for cooperation with the EBRD/CEI Secretariat,
- the on-going interaction with the CEI Working Group on SMEs should be maintained and strengthened,
- ECE proposals will be complementary to those prepared for other groupings and initiatives,
- a Memorandum of Understanding will also include provisions as to how the ECE will enable contacts to be made with other organisations in the United Nations system.

Cooperation between the CEI and non-member countries will also be clarified. The MoU will contain provisions on possible CEI focal points or consultants within the ECE who could secure continuous interaction with the CEI. Other mechanisms for regular meetings and consultations could be also envisaged. In addition, it will cover the CEI's link-up with electronic information systems

23. The Committee of National Coordinators, meeting in Brussels on 17 October 1997, agreed to a procedure proposed by the Secretariat for CEI projects at the EBRD in a document entitled "ECE-CEI Cooperation Programme on European Integration" authorising expenditure from the Italian CEI-Fund at the EBRD for the establishment of a CEI desk or focal point at the UNECE in Geneva for developing CEI-ECE cooperation.

IV. The CEI and regional security

24. Any analysis of the medium and long-term prospects of existing subregional cooperation groupings must consider not only their economic, but also their political dimension. The EU, WEU, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and NATO have specific political objectives. The defence of alliance member states against external aggression, their political and economic integration, limiting scope for the use of force between European countries, preventing conflicts and securing respect for human rights, as well as a medium and long-term strategic vision, are some of the facets of the political dimension of these organisations.

25. This political dimension is less visible in recent subregional cooperation structures such as the CEI, the BSEC or the SECI³. These bodies, supported by the European Union and its PHARE and TACIS programmes, or by the EBRD, the World Bank or the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, are geared towards economic projects which reflect a legitimate concern for stabilisation and economic development. However, such cooperation has failed to encompass political problems and crises or conflicts arising between certain participating countries or within their national borders, a shortcoming illustrated by the events in Yugoslavia and Albania.

26. The Yugoslav Federation, a founding member of the "Quadrangone", was dissolved in a climate of violence, with repercussions which continue to this day. The armed uprising in Albania was contained by means of humanitarian intervention by a European military force under Italian leadership. In both instances the CEI played only a minor role, as in the case of the

³ Southeast European Cooperation Initiative

Bosnian crisis and of Bosnian reconstruction, which relies on assistance from a number of donor countries and the European Union. The same could be said of the BSEC or SECI, in which cooperation on regional micro-projects cannot conceal the persistence of conflicts and disputes, with the consequences that these entail for the political and security situations of some of their member countries.

27. While it is true that these organisations contribute to regional security, their limited political dimension makes them reliant on other political and economic cooperation bodies and international financial organisations for the implementation of their projects. Thus the future of subregional economic cooperation groupings becomes contingent on the relations between their member countries and other organisations, and in particular on how close they are to the EU and NATO. As a result, subregional structures in central and eastern Europe and the Balkans may – unless, like the Baltic Council, they are composed of countries with comparable levels of development and clearly-defined common political objectives – be perceived as purely economic institutions, or as temporary structures designed simply to prepare the participating states for future EU membership.

28. In such circumstances the CEI has a particularly crucial role to play in stabilising south-eastern Europe, by helping bring about the transition from a situation of mutual threat and fear to one of dialogue and cooperation. Growing interdependence, due in part to the globalisation of the economy, brings with it major social and economic change, as well as migratory movements and a number of negative phenomena such as cross-border crime and terrorism. This in turn has implications for the economic, social, political, cultural, environmental and military aspects of security.

29. The geopolitical diversity of CEI member states, the organisation's development and the future accession of some of its members to such institutions as the EU and NATO make it an important structure for the shaping of a new European security and cooperation architecture. Although the CEI has competence essentially for economic, legal and environmental issues, its activities in a period of transition call for a climate of security and an abatement of regional

tensions. The fact that it is composed both of countries which are full, or to varying degrees, associate members of the EU, NATO and WEU, as well as states which do not belong to these institutions, may to some extent allay the feelings of insecurity which might arise for the latter from not being a member of these three organisations.

30. Security in Europe is not the monopoly of the Atlantic Alliance, WEU or the European Union, but is also promoted through the OSCE, the Council of Europe and various subregional bodies, including the CEI. The CEI provides the states of south-eastern Europe, which have suffered for almost a decade now from the instability, conflicts and crises in former Yugoslavia and Albania, with the economic and political impetus they need to establish dialogue and settle conflicts with neighbouring countries by means of negotiation. It enables them, as, for example, in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina and that of Croatia, to assume responsibilities at a regional level, within the framework of the CEI Presidency, providing experience which will be useful for their future integration in other institutions for political, economic and even defence cooperation. This concern is reflected in the Sarajevo Declaration adopted by the CEI Heads of State and of Government under the Bosnian Presidency and in the Croatian Presidency's programme for 1998.

31. The Sarajevo Declaration, signed on 29 November 1997, starts by emphasising "the primary importance of the enlargement processes of the NATO and the European Union (...) for the CEI and its Member States". It goes on to take stock of the CEI's activities and define its future priorities, including in security-related areas:

"(...)

4. The Heads of Government took note of the relations between the CEI and the European Commission which were initiated in January 1995. They expressed the hope that these relations will intensify and will result in the implementation of common projects (...).

(...)

6. The Heads of Government welcomed "The report on Development of CEI-OSCE cooperation" prepared by the

Committee of National Coordinators which was presented to the OSCE in view of elaborating a programme for cooperation. They expressed the interest for a closer cooperation between the CEI and the OSCE in the field of security architecture.

7 The Heads of Government expressed satisfaction with the successful participation of the CEI and its Member States in the election-monitoring process in Albania and in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1997 under the umbrella of the OSCE. They considered it to be useful that the CEI should continue to offer its assistance in the region where international monitoring is requested. A special training programme in this field offered by Italy was welcomed.

8 The Heads of Government called for a closer relationship of the CEI with the Council of Europe, in particular in the fields of human rights, minorities, youth exchange and cross-border cooperation.

(.)

11. The Heads of Government welcomed the signing by Romania of the CEI Instrument for the Protection of Minority Rights⁴

(.)

14 The Heads of Government, taking into account the suggestions included in the "Trieste Charter on Organised Crime" adopted by the Speakers of Parliaments of the CEI Member States, agreed to strengthen CEI cooperation in this field and to establish an *ad hoc* Working Group of experts to be co-chaired by Italy and Slovakia (.)

(.)

17. The Heads of Government took note of the work done by their representatives in New York regarding the possibilities for the CEI to obtain the observer status at the UN General Assembly.

⁴ This was a non-legally binding political declaration adopted in November 1994. The depositary state for the Agreement is Italy.

18 The Heads of Government welcomed activities in favour of peace, stability, security and cooperation, sustainable economic development and good-neighbourly relations of the Countries of South Eastern Europe. They support their efforts for integration into European structures. They also expressed their political will to promote constructive relations of dialogue and cooperation among neighbouring countries including the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

19. The Heads of Government reminded that the question of participation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the CEI remains open.

(.)

21 The Heads of Government expressed full appreciation for the Chairmanship of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the current year which was marked by substantial progress in the CEI's political and economic activities. These achievements stand out even more when observing the extensive signs of damage and hardship in the country which however did not reduce the efficiency and effectiveness of the Presidency.

The Heads of Government used this opportunity to express their support for full and concrete implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords. They reiterated their conviction that the further stabilisation and accelerated reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina would contribute to its constructive position and role in the process of European integration."

32 The Croatian Presidency's programme for 1998, issued on 13 January 1998, underlines the importance of the dialogue between the CEI and the European Union and sets out a number of ideas on the possible development of the CEI's role:

"3) CEI-EU dialogue

Considering the fact that one of the crucial roles of the CEI is to help Member States in their preparations to integrate themselves into EU, Croatia believes that CEI should assume much greater responsi-

bilities and tasks in this process. In view of the declared interest of most CEI-members to become EU-members in the future, and considering the adopted EU-policy towards membership enlargement, Croatia is convinced that CEI is an organization highly suitable for keeping this process going, because it already incorporates well-run cooperation mechanisms and its two members (Austria and Italy) are EU-members. To this end genuine efforts are expected from Austria and Italy, in conformity with the 1996 conclusions of the EU Council of Ministers from Dublin, and those of 1997 from Luxembourg, to exercise their influence on the European Commission whose proposals and engagement would greatly favour the CEI-EU dialogue and cooperation. (..)

6) CEI-Initiative

Croatia feels that the time has come to initiate discussions as to whether CEI should continue to operate following existing modalities, or if steps should be taken towards its further transformation into an arrangement in its own right. Aware of the diversity of views held by CEI member states on this issue, Croatia in principle favours the organizational strengthening of CEI in order to enhance its role, as well as the role of Central European States in the shaping of the future European political, economic and security architecture.

7) Closer cooperation rather than enlargement

Croatia's position is that the existing number of CEI member States (16) is quite impressive and any change in the near future should be subject to wide discussion and consensus decision. In terms of geography, nearly all Central European States are already in it. Croatia will thus encourage a closer cooperation among the existing member States within CEI, instead of its enlargement. As for FRY (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), Croatia adheres to its well-known position that FRY should first meet all the requirements widely accepted for its membership into other international organisations "

33 The political nature of these declarations is indicative of the enhanced role that the CEI intends to play in shaping a European security architecture which is not confined to well-established major organisations such as NATO, WEU and the European Union but which also includes the OSCE, the Council of Europe and a whole series of subregional organisations and cooperation structures which between them have wide-ranging competence for, *inter alia*, economic, social and environmental issues as well as the protection of human rights and the rights of national minorities. Such an approach enables small states, particularly those which are members of large European and transatlantic organisations, to make their voices heard and to ensure that their perception of European stability and security is taken into account.

34 WEU, involving 28 countries, nine of which are also members of the CEI, has a particularly important part to play, especially since it has official, privileged relations with the Atlantic Alliance and the European Union in the field of security and defence in Europe. The experience gleaned from its embargo-monitoring operations on the Danube and in the Adriatic during the years of crisis in Croatia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina and from its police missions to Mostar, in conjunction with the EU, and to Albania (Multinational Police Advisory Element – MAPE) may provide a basis for cooperation between WEU and the CEI. Some CEI member states are in the midst of a major economic and social transition and require technical assistance and advice on maintaining law and order. WEU, in conjunction with the NATO structures with responsibility for these matters within the framework of the Partnership for Peace programme, could also provide assistance for the restructuring of the armed forces of CEI states.

V. Conclusions

35 The subregional cooperation bodies that have emerged in central and eastern Europe, from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, have entered a phase of development of their roles and working methods. The NATO and EU enlargement processes, notwithstanding criticism of both their form and substance, are gathering momentum and will be the source of major upheaval in this region's geopolitical landscape for some considerable time to come. Its differing levels of

economic and social development, its cultural diversity and the heterogeneous state of its technical infrastructure, call for substantial periods of transition and adjustment, which are another potential source of crisis. In order to attain one major objective of enlargement, which is to establish lasting stability and security in the countries of central and eastern Europe, including those which are not as yet candidates for membership of the abovementioned organisations, there must be an ongoing political dialogue with all the states concerned.

36 While this is first and foremost a bilateral dialogue between the candidate country and the host institution, it also has a multilateral dimension embodied by the organisations for sub-regional cooperation. The pooling of experience and resources, coordination of efforts and setting-up of joint programmes defined both within these structures themselves and in cooperation with the major European and transatlantic political and economic organisations will help counter feelings of exclusion and insecurity engendered by the selective approach adopted by NATO and

the EU, which is based not only on financial, but also political, criteria. Subregional cooperation structures thus define their own criteria, in some cases on the advice or on the basis of the models proposed by other institutions, enabling their members to practise political and economic cooperation, which calls for a common approach by all participants.

37 The success of such cooperation contributes decisively to paving the way for the later integration of the countries concerned in more complex structures with competence at an international level. Pending such integration, sub-regional cooperation groupings are an additional source of stability and security, as can be seen from the example of the CEI, which promotes synergy both among its members and with other European and international organisations. Paradoxically, it may be the victim of its own success in that it may be dissolved once its member countries have joined the European Union. For the moment, however, it plays an essential role in the construction of a prosperous, stable and secure Europe.

APPENDIX I

*CEI Instrument
for the protection of minority rights*

“The Member States of the Central European Initiative signatory hereto,

- recognising that the questions relating to national minorities can only be resolved satisfactorily in a truly democratic political framework which is based on the rule of law and guarantees full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, equal rights and status for all citizens,
- reaffirming that the protection of national minorities concerns only citizens of the respective state, who will enjoy the same rights and have the same duties of citizenship as the rest of the population,
- convinced that national minorities form an integral part of the society of the States in which they live and that they are a factor of enrichment of each respective State and society,
- bearing in mind that a very effective remedy to achieve stability in the region are good relations between neighbours, and being conscious of the need to avoid any encouragement of separatist tendencies of national minorities in the region,
- confirming that issues concerning the rights of persons belonging to national minorities are matters of legitimate international concern and consequently do not constitute exclusively an internal affair of the respective State,
- considering that respect for the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, as part of universally recognised human rights, is an essential factor for peace, justice, stability and democracy in the States,
- convinced that the international protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, as enshrined in the present Instrument, does not permit any activity, which is contrary to the fundamental principles of international law and in particular of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States,
- recognising the particular importance of increasing constructive cooperation among themselves on questions relating to national minorities, and that such cooperation seeks to promote mutual understanding and confidence, friendly and good-neighbourly relations, international peace, security and justice,
- expressing their condemnation of aggressive nationalism, racial and ethnic hatred, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and discrimination against any person or group and of persecution on religious and ideological grounds

have agreed as follows

Article 1

States recognise the existence of national minorities as such, considering them integral parts of the society in which they live and guarantee the appropriate conditions for the promotion of their identity.

For the purpose of this Instrument the term “national minority” shall mean a group that is smaller in number than the rest of the population of a State, whose members being nationals of that State, have ethnical, religious or linguistic features different from those of the rest of the population, and are guided by the will to safeguard their culture, traditions, religion or language

Article 2

To belong to a national minority is a matter of free individual choice and no disadvantage shall arise from the exercise or non-exercise of such a choice.

Article 3

States recognise that persons belonging to national minorities have the right to exercise fully and effectively their human rights and fundamental freedoms, individually or in common with others, without any discrimination and in full equality before the law. Those persons shall be able to enjoy the rights foreseen by the present Instrument individually or in common with others and to benefit from the measures ensuring those rights.

Article 4

States guarantee the right of persons belonging to national minorities to express, preserve and develop their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture in all its aspects.

Article 5

The adoption of special measures in favour of persons belonging to national minorities aimed at promoting equality between them and the rest of the population or at taking due account of their specific conditions shall not be considered as an act of discrimination.

Article 6

States shall take effective measures to provide protection against any acts that constitute incitement to violence against persons or groups based on national, racial, ethnic or religious discrimination, hostility or hatred, including anti-Semitism.

Article 7

States recognise the particular problems of Roma (gypsies). They undertake to adopt all the legal administrative or educational measures as foreseen in the present Instrument in order to preserve and to develop the identity of Roma, to facilitate by specific measures the social integration of persons belonging to Roma (gypsies) and to eliminate all forms of intolerance against such persons.

Article 8

Without prejudice to democratic principles, States, taking measures in pursuance of their general integration policy, shall refrain from pursuing or encouraging policies aimed at the assimilation of persons belonging to national minorities against their will and shall protect these persons against any action aimed at such assimilation.

Article 9

In case of modification of administrative, judicial or electoral subdivisions States should take into account that such modifications, among other criteria, will respect the existing rights of the persons belonging to national minorities and the exercise of those rights. In any case, they should consult, according to national legislation, with the populations directly affected before adopting any modification in the matter.

Article 10

Any person belonging to a national minority shall have the right to use his or her language freely, in public as well as in private, orally and in writing.

Article 11

Any person belonging to a national minority shall have the right to use his or her surname and first names in his or her language and the right to official acceptance and registration of such surname and names.

Article 12

Whenever in an area the number of persons belonging to a national minority reaches, according to the latest census or other methods of ascertaining its consistency, a significant level, those persons shall have the right, wherever possible, to use, in conformity with applicable national legislation, their own language in oral and in written form, in their contacts with the public authorities of the said area. These authorities may reply as far as possible, in the same language

Article 13

In conformity with their national legislation States may allow, where necessary through bilateral agreements with other interested States, in particular with neighbouring States, the display of bilingual or plurilingual local names, street names and other topographical indications in areas where the number of persons belonging to a national minority reaches, according to the latest census or other methods of ascertaining its consistency, a significant level. The display of signs, inscriptions or other similar information of private nature also in the minority language should not be subject to specific restrictions, other than those generally applied in this field.

Article 14

Any person belonging to a national minority, exercising religious freedom, shall have the right to use his or her own language in worship, teaching, religious practice or observance.

Article 15

Whenever the number of persons belonging to a national minority reaches, according to the latest census or other methods of ascertaining its consistency, the majority of the population in an area, States will promote the knowledge of the minority language among officers of the local and decentralised state administrative offices. Endeavours should be made to recruit, if possible, officers, who, in addition to the knowledge of the official language, have sufficient knowledge of the minority language

Article 16

States recognise the right of persons belonging to national minorities to establish and maintain their own cultural and religious institutions, organisations or associations, which are entitled to seek voluntary financial and other contributions as well as public assistance, in conformity with national legislation.

Article 17

States recognise the right of persons belonging to national minorities to establish and maintain their own private preschools, schools and educational establishments and possibly obtain their

recognition in conformity with the relevant national legislation. Such establishments may seek public financing or other contributions.

Article 18

Notwithstanding the need to learn the official language of the State concerned, every person belonging to a national minority shall have the right to learn his or her own language and receive an education in his or her own language. The States shall endeavour to ensure the appropriate types and levels of public education in conformity with national legislation, whenever in an area the number of persons belonging to a national minority, according to the latest census or other methods of ascertaining its consistency, is at a significant level. In the context of the teaching of history and culture in such public educational establishments, adequate teaching of history and culture of the national minorities should be ensured

Article 19

States guarantee the right of persons belonging to a national minority to avail themselves of the media in their own language, in conformity with relevant State regulations and with possible financial assistance. In case of TV and radio in public ownership, the States will assure, whenever appropriate and possible, that persons belonging to national minorities have the right of free access to such media including the production of such programmes in their own language.

Article 20

States shall guarantee the right of persons belonging to national minorities to participate without discrimination in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the society of the State of which they are citizens and shall promote the conditions for exercising those rights.

Article 21

States shall allow persons belonging to a national minority to establish political parties

Article 22

In accordance with the policies of the States concerned, States will respect the right of persons belonging to national minorities to effective participation in public affairs, in particular in the decision-making process on matters affecting them. Therefore, States note the efforts undertaken to protect and create conditions for the promotion of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of certain national minorities by adopting appropriate measures corresponding to the specific circumstances of such minorities as foreseen in the CSCE documents

Article 23

Every person belonging to a national minority, while duly respecting the territorial integrity of the State, shall have the right to have free and unimpeded contacts with the citizens of another country with whom this minority shares ethnic, religious or linguistic features or a cultural identity. States shall not unduly restrict the free exercise of those rights. Furthermore, States will encourage transfrontier arrangements at national, regional and local levels.

Article 24

Any person belonging to a national minority shall have an effective remedy before a national judicial authority against any violation of rights set forth in the present Instrument, provided that those rights are enacted in national legislation.

Article 25

In any area where those who belong to a national minority represent the majority of the population, States shall take the necessary measures to ensure that those who do not belong to this minority shall not suffer from any disadvantage, including such that may result from the implementation of the measures of protection foreseen by the present Instrument

Article 26

None of these commitments shall be interpreted as implying any right to engage in any activity in contravention of the fundamental principles of international law and, in particular, of the sovereign equality, territorial integrity and political independence of States. Nothing in the present Instrument shall affect the duties related to persons belonging to national minorities as citizens of the States concerned

Persons belonging to national minorities will also respect, in the exercise of their rights, the rights of others, including those of persons belonging to the majority population of the respective State or to other national minorities

Article 27

This Instrument shall not prejudice the provisions of domestic law or any international agreement which provide greater protection for national minorities or persons belonging to them.

Done in one copy at Turin this 19th day of November 1994 in the English language ”

APPENDIX II

CEI member states – membership of other European, transatlantic and subregional organisations

CEI	European Union	WEU	NATO	OSCE	Council of Europe	BSEC	CIS
Albania	-	-	EAPC	Member	Member	Member	-
Austria	Member	Observer	EAPC	Member	Member	-	-
Belarus	-	-	EAPC	Member	-	-	Member
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-	-	-	Member	-	-	-
Bulgaria	Candidate	Associate partner	EAPC	Member	Member	Member	-
Croatia	-	-	-	Member	Member	-	-
Czech Republic	Candidate +	Associate partner	EAPC Candidate +	Member	Member	-	-
Hungary	Candidate +	Associate partner	EAPC Candidate +	Member	Member	-	-
Italy	Member	Member	Member	Member	Member	-	-
FYROM ¹	-	-	EAPC	Member	Member	-	-
Moldova	-	-	EAPC	Member	Member	Member	Member
Poland	Candidate +	Associate partner	EAPC Candidate +	Member	Member	-	-
Romania	Candidate	Associate partner	EAPC	Member	Member	Member	-
Slovak Republic	Candidate	Associate partner	EAPC	Member	Member	-	-
Slovenia	Candidate +	Associate partner	EAPC	Member	Member	-	-
Ukraine	-	-	EAPC	Member	Member	Member	Member

BSEC: Black Sea Economic Cooperation (1992)

CEI: Central European Initiative (1992)

CIS: Commonwealth of Independent States (1991)


EAPC: Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (NATO, 1997)

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (1949)

OSCE: Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (1994)

WEU: Western European Union (1954)

¹ Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

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