



## UN High level Political Forum 2019

### **Panel discussion on “The contribution of regional cooperation and partnerships to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda: the experience of the Central European Initiative (CEI)”**

#### Background

In order to accelerate the progress towards sustainable development in all Countries, the United Nations are promoting coherent policies of State institutions to pursue the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2019 High Level Political Forum will offer a major opportunity to review advancements and identify gaps with special regard to the implementation of SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 13 (climate action) and SDG 16 (peaceful societies, justice and strong institutions). The HLPF will take place in a crucial year, marked by a boosted endeavor to take stock of the situation and further mobilize all relevant stakeholders – Member States, international financing institutions, regional organizations, private sector, academia, civil society – to reorient policies and actions toward investments conducive to the implementations of the SDGs globally. The Outcome Document of the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development set the stage for relaunching the momentum on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the main tool for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The HLPF will, itself, pave the way further for other key upcoming appointments, starting with the SDGs Summit and the Climate Summit in late September.

As established by the UN Charter, regional and sub-regional arrangements are called to complement and support UN efforts in the maintenance of international peace and security. As increasingly experienced in all regions of the world, regional and sub-regional partnerships also play a fundamental role in promoting convergence on shared values and objectives and in enhancing cooperation to effectively address major challenges transcending national borders, thus substantially contributing to the achievement of SDGs. In this spirit, the Secretary-General

has identified the development of partnerships between the UN and regional and sub-regional organizations as a central pillar of the UN system reform which is currently in its implementation phase.

Against this background, this side-event aims at highlighting the specific contribution of the Central European Initiative (CEI), offering an opportunity to share experiences and lessons learned and to consider the possibility to adapt some of the tools and practices CEI has developed in 30 years of activity to other regional contexts, with a specific focus on programs and initiatives related to the SDGs under review during the HLPF.

### The Central European Initiative

The CEI, this year celebrating its 30th anniversary under the Italian Presidency, is one of the largest intergovernmental regional organization in Europe, bringing together at the same table 17 Countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Montenegro, Republic of Albania, Republic of Belarus, Republic of Bulgaria, Republic of Croatia, Republic of Moldova, Republic of North Macedonia, Republic of Poland, Republic of Serbia, Republic of Slovenia, Romania, Slovak Republic, Ukraine) from Central, South East and East Europe area, encompassing the geographical region from the Baltic, to the Adriatic and the Black Seas. Its unique cross-regional footprint is also attested to by the fact of including among its participating Countries EU Member States, EU candidate Countries and partners.

Since 2011, CEI has an observer status at the United Nations' General Assembly. On this basis, the General Assembly adopts by consensus a biennial Resolution on the Cooperation between the United Nations and the CEI, the latter being adopted on 26 November 2018 (A/RES/73/10). This Resolution welcomes the important role consistently played by the CEI as a promoter of political dialogue and as a flexible and pragmatic platform for regional cooperation, thus supporting peace, stability, security and the economic progress of its member States, including through the implementation of tangible projects and programs in priority fields; recognizes the commitment of the Initiative to contribute to the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and acknowledges, in this context, that the CEI Plan of Action 2018–2020 was elaborated in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and thus bears in mind that interconnectivity in sustainable development can facilitate the effective translation of sustainable development policies into concrete actions at the national level (OPs 1 to 4).

The goals embedded in the CEI Plan of Action stem from the challenges faced by its Member States as well as the geographical region. The CEI pays special importance to the Agenda 2030, and has contributed to the process which led to its adoption. Most of CEI activities thus contribute to the goals and implementation of the SDGs. The added value of the CEI experience can be seen through its large membership, the focus on sharing of knowledge and capacity building for fostering strong institutions and societies, as well as CEI's multi-stakeholder dimension. On one hand, the governmental pillar is the backbone of its intergovernmental institutional dialogue, on the other, the parliamentary and business dimensions allow for enhanced dialogue also in these constituencies. The instruments at CEI, as well as its projects and activities, foster the participation of civil society, as well as cooperation of local and regional actors, thus close to its citizens.

The CEI promotes cooperation in all areas under review by the 2019 HLPF. It places a significant focus on carrying out concrete actions aimed at implementing life-long learning and develop competencies through mobility, enhancing scientific literacy and technological knowledge and capacity (Quality education SDG 4), improving research and innovation systems (Decent work and economic growth SDG 8), promoting social integration of people from groups at risk of exclusion, exchanging experience on large-scale migration (Reduced inequalities SDG 10), fostering adaptation to climate change (Climate action SDG 13), promoting safe and secure e-Government solutions, consolidating institutional capacities and promoting effective anti-corruption measures and open data (Peaceful societies, justice and strong institutions SDG 16). Under the Italian Presidency 2019, the CEI program puts emphasis - with targeted initiatives and high level events during this year - on education, research and technology (SDG 4), as well as on local and regional policies for sustainable development and climate change mitigation and adaptation (SDG 10 and 13). The fight against corruption and strengthening rule of law (SDG 16) is on focus, building also on the outcomes of the HLPF Preparatory Conference on SDG 16 hosted in Rome on 27-29 May 2019.

The CEI uses a flexible approach, taking into account the needs of its Member States and adjusting its activities accordingly. Moreover, the CEI experience is focused on fostering synergies among various SDGs.

#### Aim of the event

The main objective of the panel discussion is to share and exchange knowledge and experiences with all relevant stakeholders regarding good practices of regional partnership for empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality, such as is the case of the CEI in the delivery of SDGs, both through political dialogue as well as through joint commitments and their concrete follow up through regional and transnational activities and instruments.

The panel discussion will therefore showcase CEI's experiences and practices on three areas:

- as a platform for political intergovernmental dialogue, as well as for the meaningful engagement of all stakeholders (Parliaments, local institutions, private sector, civil society, universities and academia, young people) in policies and activities related to the SDGs;
- as a platform providing access to flexible and innovative financial instruments aimed at supporting programs targeted to the implementation of the SDGs;
- as a platform to advance institutional consolidation - through capacity-building, know-how transfer, capacities' pooling and experience sharing - favoring solutions tailored to specific local contexts while facilitating convergence towards common standards in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Italian Presidency and the CEI-Executive Secretariat will present some of CEI flagship initiatives/programs, as well as its overall approach, in each area.

The event will also provide an opportunity to further the discussion on how to improve synergies and cooperation between regional organizations and the United Nations as well as among regional and sub-regional organizations, as it is the case for the longstanding partnership between

the European Union and CEI, in the framework of the common effort to advance the SDGs and promote regional integration.

Leading questions

- How can regional and sub-regional organizations and partnerships increase their contribution to UN efforts aimed at mobilizing support for the 2030 Agenda and accelerating its implementation through the meaningful engagement of all relevant stakeholders?
- Which kind of financial instruments can better suit regional, national and local efforts in support of policies oriented to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda?
- Which best practices can be drawn from CEI's experience on promoting policy convergence among States and fostering synergies among various SDGs?