



Ministero degli Affari Esteri
e della Cooperazione Internazionale

BALKAN AND BLACK SEA PERSPECTIVES 2022 *Supporting the transition*

Wednesday, the 7th of December 2022, from 2.30 PM to 7.15 PM CET

Rome, Hotel Quirinale - ([Via Nazionale, 7](#))

High-Level Conference organised by the **NATO Foundation**,
in cooperation with the **NATO Public Diplomacy Division**,
the **Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation** and the **NATO Defense College**.

The event represented the **eighth edition** of the series of annual conferences that the Foundation dedicates to the **Western Balkans** and the **Black Sea area**. With the participation of **14 regional specialists** and **more than 250 people among the public** (both in-person and virtually connected), the working afternoon was a timely occasion to delve into the most pressing challenges and opportunities of a region of great strategic relevance for the entire Euro-Atlantic community.

A selection of quotes from our speakers follows below.

Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo, *President, NATO Defense College Foundation, Rome*

«The region has always been crucial for European security, at the crossroads of many interests and ambitions: be it local nationalism or various external factors, including Russia [...] The Balkans and the Black Sea region should become part of the Euro-Atlantic community».

Pasquale Terracciano, *Director General, Public and Cultural Diplomacy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Rome*

«I am convinced that today's conference is very timely. The Balkan and the Black Sea regions are experiencing a relevant degree of instability with important consequences on NATO and the EU. Economic and social dynamics make the region less predictable».

Ivan Vejvoda, *Permanent Fellow and Head of "Europe's Futures", Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna*

«The homework is in our six Western Balkan countries, to become better for ourselves. More democratic, more rule-based, more independent at the judiciary level. [...] There are geopolitical and geostrategic decisions that require courage and boldness. And I think we are seeing some initial steps with the candidate status given by the EU to Ukraine and Moldova: the Euro-Atlantic dimension of our continent is to be strengthened».

Solomon Passy, *President Atlantic Club of Bulgaria, Sofia*

«Our strength is in our unity and our weakness is in our division. The first aim of our enemy is to divide us. Our first aim is to unite behind NATO, behind the EU and all of its institutions like the Eurozone and the Schengen area. [...] Giving the existing reality, we need working solutions, concrete measures that are suitable to this very moment».

Ahmet Evin, *Founding Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, and Professor Emeritus, Sabanci University, Istanbul*

«The slow progress of the Western Balkans towards EU membership is also due to the significant degree of the ethnic, political and cultural divisions in the subregion, as well as within most countries of the region».

Bruno Lété, *Senior Fellow, Security and Defense, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Brussels*

«Time after time, both EU and NATO enlargements have contributed to peace and stability in Europe. They are definitely not responsible for the war that we see today on the continent».

Harun Karčić, *Journalist and Political Analyst, Al Jazeera Balkans, Sarajevo*

«Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has shifted the Black Sea region from the periphery to the centre of Euro-Atlantic security processes. The war has also highlighted that the Black Sea region should be considered not separately, but as a part of the whole European security system».

Mădălina Mocan, *Fellow, Aspen Institute Romania, Bucharest*

«It is worth mentioning that in the last couple of years we have witnessed increased cooperation across the region, also in the framework of European and other international mechanisms, notably when it comes to monitoring the progresses of each country in combating trafficking and exploitation».

Sem Fabrizi, *former EU Ambassador to Serbia, Rome*

«When talking about substantial, even if less advertised problems, the EU has a main role in the Western Balkans through two important elements: political initiative and policy structuring. We are in a good moment where both have acquired a new impulsion. In fact, the enlargement is back on track, despite its moments of eclipse».

Ana Đurnić, *Public Policy Researcher, Institut Alternativa, Podgorica*

«We have an anti-corruption agency, which was one of the requirements of the EU negotiation process, but is currently seriously lacking results in fighting corruption. It is not preventing and it is not educating. [...] This notwithstanding, Montenegro has important results in fighting organised crime: among others, it cooperates with INTERPOL and Europol, and this proves it can deliver results».

Yannis Alexis Zepos, *Former Ambassador and Secretary-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens*

«Our panel's title itself, "Fragile democracies", is a delicate title. All countries in the area have different backgrounds: they have come through different processes, with different models that have been adapted over the years, and the transformation has not been automatic. It means that the idea of good governance, lack of corruption and correct judiciary are all parts of a non-failed democracy».

Slavica Grkovska, *Deputy Prime Minister in charge for Good Governance Policies, Skopje*

«One of my biggest disappointments is that the region has not learned the lesson from the war in former Yugoslavia: playing the nationalistic card is never a solution. Indeed, it is actually very difficult to go back on track afterwards. The war in Ukraine is tragic, but it can also represent a turning point, now that our region's accession to the EU is seen as a number one priority».

Alba Çela, *Executive Director, Albanian Institute for International Studies, Tirana*

«All the challenges that we face, cannot be solved individually. We need more regional cooperation, an inclusive regional cooperation: there have been examples in the past showing that when we work as a region, and also together with the EU, we can have good positive stories».

Francesco Martino, *Analyst and Editor, Osservatorio Balcani Caucaso Transeuropa, Sofia*

«Speaking about South-Eastern Europe, societies share a common difficult situation. Most of the countries are, literally, shrinking when it comes to their population. [...] Population is changing or is becoming older and this makes these societies less flexible and more insecure to some extent».

The **full recordings** of the event are available on the [NDCF YouTube channel](#).

For further information, contact the NDCF Communication Team at: ndcf.pressmediarelations@gmail.com

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