



With the contribution of



Scientific Advisor



Balkans and Black Sea Perspectives 2026

Democratic Resilience, AI, and Cognitive Security

High-Level Conference

*Organised by the **NATO Defense College Foundation (NDCF)**,
in cooperation with the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs (D.G.U.E.)**, **International Council on
Environmental Economics and Development (ICEED)**, **Fondazione Compagnia di San
Paolo**, **Fondazione CSF**, and the **NATO Defense College (NDC)***

Rome, 26 May 2026

*Venue: **Starhotels Metropole** (Via Principe Amedeo, 3, 00185)*

High - Level Conference

15,00 – 15,30 | Participants Arrival

15,30 – 15,55 | Welcome Remarks

- **Alessandro Minuto-Rizzo**, President, NATO Defense College Foundation, Rome *
- **Catherine Bourdès**, Director of Academic Plans, Policy and Engagement, NATO Defense College, Rome *
- **Nicolò Russo Perez**, Director, Fondazione CSF (Scientific Advisor Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo), Turin **

- **Divya Gupta**, Chief of Executive Board and Committee, ICEED, New York *
- **Sara Minucci**, Senior Programme Officer, Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo, Turin *

15,55 – 16,05 | Summary of the Morning Session and Opening of the Afternoon Panel

Bojana Zoric, Policy Analyst for the Western Balkans and the Eastern Neighbourhood, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris *

16,05 – 17,20

SESSION I NATO AND THE EU: EVOLVING STRATEGIES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Chair: **Tatjana Dordevic**, Journalist and Writer, former Al Jazeera Balkans, Milan *

- **Christian Schmidt**, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Office of the High Representative (OHR), Sarajevo **
- **Marco Criscuolo**, Director Strategy and Policy for Cyber, Cyber and Digital Transformation Division, NATO HQ, Brussels *
- **Zoran Jolevski**, Former Minister of Defence and Former Ambassador of North Macedonia, Skopje *
- **Elene Kintsurashvili**, Senior Program Coordinator, Transatlantic Security Team, German Marshall Fund, Warsaw *
- **Harun Karcic**, Vice-Chairman, Sarajevo Security Conference, Sarajevo *

Q&A Session

17,20 – 17,40 | Networking Coffee Break

17,40 – 17,50 | Keynote Speech

Valentina Superti, Director, Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood, Western Balkans (ENEST.B), European Commission, Brussels **

17,50 – 19,05

SESSION II ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND COGNITIVE SECURITY: EMERGING RISKS AND IMPLICATIONS

Chair: **Dardan Kocani**, Field Coordinator for Kosovo; Analyst on Organised Crime and Security, GI-TOC, Prishtina *

- **Edoardo Giglio**, EU Digital & Cyber Policy Leader, Defense, Security & Justice Industry Leader, Deloitte, Rome *
- **Solomon Passy**, Founding President, Atlantic Club of Bulgaria; Co-Chairman, Hello Space, Sofia *
- **Miroslav Sazdovski**, Senior Analyst, Western Balkans, Hybrid CoE, Helsinki *
- **Katarina Klingova**, Research Lead, Centre for Democracy & Resilience, GLOBSEC, Bratislava *
- **Michele Empler**, PhD Candidate, University of Tuscia; Vice-Coordinator, Algo-Freedom Society, Viterbo *

Q&A Session

19,05 – 19,15 | Concluding Remarks

Thomas Botzios, Head of the Adriatic and Balkans Unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Rome *

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END OF THE WORKING DAY