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Bulgarian Presidency of the Council  
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## Inter-Parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) 15-17 February 2018, Sofia

### Background information

#### Session IV: State of Play of the Black Sea Region

The Black Sea region is of strategic importance for the European Union as there are shared challenges and opportunities for the EU and countries of the wider region. There is also a common need to make sure that peace, democracy, security, stability, regional cooperation and sustainable prosperity are ensured all around the region. As developments in this region, strategically situated at the junction of Europe, Middle East and Central Asia have a direct impact on EU internal affairs, the EU has acknowledged the need for stronger involvement.

The response to most of the region's challenges is to have more Europe at the Black Sea, but also to have more Black Sea on the European agenda. The EU is not a recent player in the Black Sea region, but its involvement needs to become more focused and pragmatic.

The maritime security challenges in the Black Sea region as part of the broader challenges affecting people, activities and infrastructure in the maritime domain are addressed through the implementation of the EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) and Action Plan of 2014.

The EU Global Strategy of 2016 has stated the EU support for regional organisations and cooperative relationships across regions and with the EU, without striving to export the EU model but rather seeking reciprocal inspiration from different experiences.

A particular focus is placed on resilience in the EU's Eastern and Southern neighbouring countries. This reflects the special political commitments of the EU's Neighbourhood Policy. The 2015 Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy was closely coordinated with work on the Global Strategy. A joint report on the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy Review was published on 18 May 2017. The EU's relations with six of the ENP countries - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, are defined under the Eastern Partnership framework, all of them being part of the wider Black Sea region.

The Global Strategy states the importance and the support of the EU for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of states, the inviolability of borders and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The Black Sea Synergy is the main EU initiative for the region. It was proposed in 2007, during the German Presidency of the EU Council. Formally launched in 2008, it aims at focusing political attention at the regional level and at developing cooperation within the



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Black Sea region, and between the region as a whole and the EU. It is a forum for tackling concrete common problems while encouraging political and economic reforms. The Black Sea Synergy is by definition flexible and inclusive, based on a bottom-up approach and aiming at participation of all states in the region.

The geopolitical importance of the Black Sea and the Caspian basin for the energy security requires to take advantage of the potential of the region as a hub for exploration and development of new energy resources as well as new supply routes for the benefit both of the EU and the wider Black Sea region.

