

UNICRI Opening Speech of the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence Initiative International NFP Meeting

Brussels, 14 May 2025

Remarks by Ms. Bettina Tucci Bartsiotas, Member of the UNICRI Board of Trustees

Dear Heads of Secretariat,

Dear National Focal Points and Deputies,

Dear representatives of the European Commission,
and Strategic Partners.

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues,

On 13 May 2010, UNICRI signed the first agreement with the European Commission for the establishment of the CBRN Centres of Excellence. That day, an amazing journey started, and I am proud to see where we stand today.

As previous Director of UNICRI, I was fortunate to meet partners and colleagues from across the Initiative and witness the important work done by all of you.

Today, I want to take a moment to recognize the outstanding contributions of all eight regions. Each one of you is advancing our shared mission to enhance CBRN safety and security globally—through

innovation, partnership, and an unwavering dedication to capacity building.

Let me begin by welcoming the new Head of the **African Atlantic Façade Regional Secretariat**, Colonel Hafid Messaoudi. We are confident that his leadership will strengthen the Secretariat's capacity and regional cooperation. The region is finalizing its 10th national CBRN Action Plan and paving the way for the Regional CBRN Action Plan.

I also like to commend the region of **Central Asia** as it embarks on the update of their Regional CBRN Action Plan, a comprehensive framework for cross-border collaboration, legislative harmonization and capacity development. It is also worth highlighting that the Kyrgyz Republic finalized development of its National CBRN Action Plan through inclusive inter-ministerial engagement.

The **Eastern and Central Africa** region has also been very dynamic. Under the leadership of the Head of Secretariat, Kenya hosted the Heads of Secretariat meeting 2025, which was a great occasion for interregional cooperation and sharing of expertise between the different Secretariats.

I would like to commend **the GCC** region for initiating the 2nd phase of Project 82 on enhancing medical preparedness and response to CBRN events. This project offers a critical opportunity to build capacity through

a series of comprehensive Train-The-Trainers and national training courses.

I would like to warmly welcome Eng. Iyad Al Dasouqi as the new Head of the Regional Secretariat for **the Middle East** and National Focal Point for Jordan. His efforts to revive Jordan's CBRN National Interagency Team and support to the update of the National and Regional Action Plan are commendable.

The North Africa and Sahel Regional Secretariat based in Algiers will celebrate its 10th year anniversary this year. The region has successfully and actively participated in different CBRN activities, on biological and chemical waste management and One Health.

In Southeast Asia Singapore and the EU Co-Chaired an ASEAN Regional Forum Workshop on the Detection, Response and Deterrence of CBR Incidents and Malaysia hosted the regional meeting to launch project 98 on CBRN Medical Emergency Preparedness and Response.

Through careful assessment of emerging CBRN risks and threats, ten countries of **Southeast and Eastern Europe** are currently updating their CBRN Regional Action Plan adopted in 2022. This strategic document allows the region to prioritize targeted areas of regional importance and address them in new projects and activities.

This year holds special significance as we mark the 15th anniversary of the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence Initiative—a milestone that reflects not only the longevity, but also the strength and adaptability of our global partnership.

As we celebrate this anniversary, I invite you to reflect on how far we've come, and how much more we can achieve—together. I wish you all a productive and inspiring meeting, and I hope you also find moments to enjoy the unique spirit of this collaboration.