

Conclusions

by the Heads of Delegations of the Committees of Foreign Affairs of the Parliaments of the Visegrad Countries

We, the Chairs of the Committees on Foreign Affairs having met in Budapest on 13-14 December, 2017 under the Hungarian V4 Presidency agree that the growing challenges to global world order and to European security call for decisive action and strong EU leadership. We believe that the adoption of the EU Global Strategy (hereinafter EUGS) appropriately charts the way forward for the Union to become a significant security actor in the North-Atlantic region as well as globally.

The EU's core interests are to provide for the security, freedom and prosperity of its citizens. To make this happen the EU needs to promote the rules-based international order, to strengthen the transatlantic partnership and to ensure a stable and prosperous neighbourhood including both in the East and in the South.

In this regard enlargement in the Western Balkans continues to be an outstanding policy instrument. Therefore, we emphasize the need for the reinforcement of a credible European accession perspective for the Western Balkans.

The future of the Common Foreign and Security Policy

A further strengthened Common Foreign and Security Policy (hereinafter CFSP) informed by the underlying core interests continues to encompass the fundamental European values as stipulated in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union: human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, as well as justice, solidarity and tolerance. We strongly support the ongoing work aiming to translate the EUGS into practice.

The Eastern Partnership summit held on 24 November 2017 in Brussels was a decisive manifestation of the Union's foreign policy in action. We welcome that the Brussels Declaration reflects the different aspirations of the partner countries and offers a European perspective for those interested and living up to relevant international commitments, including those deriving from the respective Association Agreements.

We also attach great importance to the constant efforts of the European Union to tackle the ongoing migration crisis since illegal migration can raise major security challenges and have a negative impact on the countries of destination, transit and origin. The V4 remains committed to protect the rights of political refugees who arrive in the EU and to address the root causes of irregular migration as well as the effective control of the external borders with a view to stem and prevent illegal flows. The overhaul of the internal dimension of the migration policy must go hand in hand with all these efforts.

We strongly believe that reinvigorating the EU's external action implies, as also envisaged by the EUGS, greater institutional coherence. The EU's comprehensive

approach along with the different policy instruments throughout the security-development nexus should be refined and further aligned. We continue to support the ongoing work in this regard.

Finally we reiterate the need to enhance the effectiveness of the CSDP (Common Security and Defence Policy) and that of the MS's defence capabilities with a view to strengthening the EU's ability to provide for its own security and act autonomously when and where necessary and with partners wherever possible. We welcome the first results in this regard, such as the imminent launching of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the setting up of the European Defence Fund, and we support the ongoing work in this direction. It is also to be emphasized that close cooperation between the EU and NATO remains vital to enhance the CSDP and the security of Europe in general, thus we welcome the progress made on the implementation of the EU-NATO Joint Declaration.

The Western Balkans: EU and NATO integration

The migration crisis of the recent past has proven again that the stability and security of Europe begins with the stability and security of the Balkans. Peace in the Western Balkans region is therefore a priority strategic interest for the European Union as well. We are convinced that a credible and predictable European perspective can pave the way to the European value choice of the EU's neighbourhood. This is why the V4 firmly support the enlargement process of the Union. Our objective is to achieve the complete and tangible reunification of Europe – through the successful EU accession of the countries of South-East Europe.

It is the interest of the V4 countries, that the countries of our Southern neighbourhood conclude successful and comprehensive preparations in order to become full-fledged members of the European Union as soon as possible.

We welcome that based on their merits new chapters have been opened during the accession negotiations of Montenegro and Serbia.

We expect that Member States will come to an agreement in the course of 2018 to commence accession negotiations with Albania and Macedonia. We are ready to provide assistance to this end through our parliamentary network.

A tangible European perspective has to be offered to Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo* as well: it is important for their citizens to feel the commitment of the European Union towards the region.

The V4 stand by the Open-Door Policy of NATO and support the NATO accession of the Western Balkans countries that are willing and able to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership and whose inclusion can contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area.

The Parliaments of V4 countries support a comprehensive partner relationship with the legislatures of the Western Balkan countries and urge for a consultation on an equal footing on priority issues on the agenda of the European Union: without the

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

involvement of our neighbours, we will not be able to find lasting and effective solutions to issues such as European security, migration, connectivity or energy security. To this end we urge for regular consultations on such issues with our partners on the Western Balkans.

Signed in Budapest, on 14 December 2017

On behalf of:

Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic

Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic

Hungarian National Assembly

Senate of the Parliament of the Republic of Poland

National Council of the Slovak Republic