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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Third Ministerial Conference of the Prague Process "Addressing
challenges together" (Bratislava, 19-20 September 2016)

Delegations will find attached the Joint Declaration, approved by the above-mentioned Ministerial Conference.

Prague Process

3rd Ministerial Conference of the Prague Process

Bratislava, 19 – 20 September 2016

Joint Declaration

Preamble

We, the Ministers and Representatives responsible for migration and migration-related matters from Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kosovo¹, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Malta, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and Uzbekistan (hereinafter: 'the Parties');

Gathered in Bratislava at the invitation of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and with the presence of the European Commission on 19 and 20 September 2016, within the framework of the Third Ministerial Conference of the Prague Process – 'Addressing challenges together';

Reaffirming the principles and commitments expressed in and emphasising the importance of the Joint Declaration adopted at the First Ministerial Conference on 'Building Migration Partnerships', held in Prague on 27 and 28 April 2009, which launched the Prague Process and remains the overall framework and basis for our cooperation;

Reaffirming the priorities of the Prague Process Action Plan 2012 – 2016 endorsed in the Joint Declaration of the Second Ministerial Conference 'Building Migration Partnerships in Action', held in Poznań on 3 and 4 November 2011, which continues to constitute a valuable reference for our further cooperation in the coming five-year period 2017 - 2021;

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Recognising, in addition to the international, regional and national programmes, frameworks and platforms for cooperation referred to in the above-mentioned Joint Declarations, the role of the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility, the European Agenda for Migration, the revised European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU Central Asia Strategy and taking note of the Eurasian economic integration process;

Highlighting the long-lasting successful cooperation among the Parties at senior and expert level, and recognising in particular the value of knowledge and experience gained through the implementation of the Prague Process Targeted Initiative, in particular the collection of thematic best practices and the continuous work on the Prague Process Knowledge Base, which comprises migration profiles and the i-Map, which will further be utilised;

Welcoming the progress achieved by Parties and their commitment to work together and bring the continuing improvement in their national migration systems;

Recognising that the Prague Process Action Plan 2012-2016 has been implemented in line with its intended schedule and acknowledging that the main added value of the Prague Process lies in its dialogue function, and drawing attention to the need to emphasise its potential to modernise the migration management systems of the Parties while encouraging their approximation;

Convinced, given the current scale of migration flows affecting a number of the Parties, and recognising that there is a need to address challenges in a spirit of partnership and cooperation, including through the exchange of experience and best practices;

Have taken into account the following when defining and designing further Prague Process measures in 2017-2021:

Changes in migration policy approaches and improvements in migration management systems in the Prague Process region since the Ministerial Conference held in 2011 in Poznań, Poland.

The current global migration situation which draws the attention of all Parties to the complex challenges posed by mixed migration flows along identified routes. Many Parties have been seriously affected by migration crises. There is a probability of continuation of current migration flows, including possible emerging of new routes and patterns.

The evaluation of the implementation of the Prague Process Action Plan 2012-2016 which confirmed that the Parties found the six Cooperation Areas, as set out in the Action Plan 2012-2016, consistent with and complementary to their national migration policies.

The Prague Process activities gave a significant stimulus to developments and improvements in migration management systems and also provided a useful toolkit. The Prague Process contributed significantly to enhancing mutual understanding and international cooperation in the field of migration and international protection and is perceived as an important platform for strengthening dialogue and cooperation.

Have agreed to:

Embark on a third phase of practical implementation of the political agenda. The Parties are dedicated to achieving specific results, both in the short and the long term, and agree that the timeframe for these measures should be the period between 2017 and 2021. This timeframe will allow for proper preparation of actions, ensure the allocation of adequate financial resources, provide for the best dissemination of results and allow for the evaluation of results.

Continue the Prague Process in line with the existing Action Plan 2012-2016, strengthen our cooperation further and provide for the continuity of the Prague Process Targeted Initiative with a view to ensuring that the Prague Process continues to be a reliable and sustainable platform.

Task Senior Officials of the Parties to work jointly on the Prague Process on the basis of the Joint Declaration. The senior officials should meet before the end of 2016 in order to establish a work plan outlining specific development measures for the relevant priorities for the period of 2017 – 2021.

Building on existing tools, establish and maintain a Training Academy that could ensure the use and follow up of results and products of the Pilot Projects and umbrella projects, create common curricula and establish a methodology for training the staff of state authorities and the judiciary, as well as to improve practical cooperation.

Modify the present Knowledge Base for the purposes of the Prague Process Migration Observatory with better capacity to analyse and present reliable and comprehensible data on migration to the Prague Process Parties' region. This will help reinforce the Prague Process.

Continue the modus operandi implemented by the Pilot Projects for new projects, in order to further identify instances of best practices in areas of interest to the participating states.

Stay committed to:

Putting additional emphasis on training activities, which share jointly prepared standards and best practices and additional emphasis on supporting national actions and follow up of pilot projects at regional level. Most actions implemented under the Prague Process have so far focused on the creation of basic common standards in the six Cooperation Areas set out in the Action Plan 2012-2016 applicable to all Parties.

Devoting greater attention to the wider dissemination of results of past and future projects through the promotion of their products: handbooks, guidelines, training programmes and best standards. It is worthwhile considering the above in the context of the Prague Process, and potentially in the context of other regional migration-related processes.

Focus on a number of specific topics in order to make best use of the Prague Process results and products and so as to better address existing migration challenges and support preventive measures, while upholding international human rights standards. Given the variety of geographical, migration and socioeconomic situations, it is possible that the Parties will have differing interests. Their participation in the implementation of the different actions should therefore be on a voluntary basis. Priority actions and method of their implementation will be agreed at Senior Officials' level upon proposal of the Participating States.

Provide adequate financial resources for the implementation of the Prague Process. The very dynamic and sometimes volatile migration situation in the region calls for an amended funding mechanism that would allow for a flexible response to emerging needs on an ad-hoc basis.

Therefore, the activities will be financed in a coherent manner through the following sources:

- European Union funds, subject to availability and only where relevant,
- national funds of the Parties (on voluntary basis),
- funds from other international institutions and organisations.

Uphold the established flexible implementation structure and coordination mechanism of the Prague Process, which has proved to be effective.

Monitor and evaluate the implementation of actions in 2017-2021 on an annual basis at senior officials' meetings. A final review of the implementation of the Action Plan will take place at the ministerial level.
