

# Managing Migration Challenges Together

8 February 2017, Vienna

## Declaration

We, the Ministers of the Interior and the Ministers of Defence of Hungary, the Czech Republic and Austria (as host of the Conference), together with the participating colleagues from the Salzburg Forum<sup>1</sup> and the Group of Friends from the Western Balkans as well as the Central European Defence Cooperation (CEDC) and their partners from Southeast Europe, participating in the Conference “Managing Migration Challenges Together” held in Vienna on 8 February 2017

WELCOMING the Malta Declaration by the members of the European Council on the external aspects of migration; in particular that a key element of a sustainable migration policy is to ensure effective control of the EU external border and stem illegal flows into the EU;

REMAINING COMMITTED to the EU-Turkey Statement as well as to continued support for the partners along the Western Balkans route to stem migration flows;

APPRECIATING the continued efforts made by Greece and the partners along the Western Balkans route in this context, also considering the differences regarding protection of land and sea borders;

UNDERLINING the necessity of comprehensive solutions and at the same time ready to contribute to effective and sustainable European and EU solutions;

DETERMINED to take a proactive approach in shaping of measures, such as the establishment of reception centers outside Europe, in order to save lives, prevent uncontrolled migration flows and to return illegal migrants;

EMPHASISING the important role of the Eastern Mediterranean route and the Balkans with regard to security and stability in Europe;

TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION the EU perspective of the Western Balkans which is strongly supported;

RECALLING the unprecedented number of migrants illegally crossing EU borders in 2015, particularly along the Western Balkans route, and the measures taken to control it by all participating parties as well as the importance of the route remaining closed;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the Western Balkans route has been under control since 2016 and that the situation has been stabilised as illegal border crossings have been greatly reduced although they have not completely come to an end;

RECOGNISING that in the last four months of 2016, the number of arrivals on the Eastern Mediterranean route were 98% lower than during the same period of 2015 but that the pressure on

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<sup>1</sup>Bulgaria and Romania participating as observers; Greece also participated in the conference

EU countries at the external border and other partners remains high and the migration situation is still fragile;

CONCERNED that a large number of migrants remain stranded along the Western Balkans route;

ACKNOWLEDGING that migration routes may change quickly and people smugglers might find new routes and exploit the desperate situation of migrants;

CONCERNED that the situation at the borders along the Western Balkans route could deteriorate swiftly and numbers of migrants illegally crossing EU borders could increase again;

ACKNOWLEDGING that a sustainable solution requires clarity on possible scenarios and the best use of all available civil, police and military resources according to national legislation framework;

EMPHASISING the need to prepare for possible challenges in this context and be ready to respond in a coordinated and effective way;

DISCUSSED two possible scenarios, scenario 1 assuming that the situation in 2017 will be similar to the situation in the second half of 2016, scenario 2 assuming the situation will deteriorate in 2017;

AGREED on the elaboration of a Joint Action Plan including a Crisis Response Plan to be drawn up by the responsible civil, police and military authorities of the participating partners taking into account their responsibilities and jurisdiction according to their national legislation as well as the civil responsibility for protection of borders by April 2017. Among other components that will be determined in additional consultations, this plan shall include:

1. A comprehensive assessment of the current situation in the region (numbers of migrants, migration routes, deployed personnel, etc.) based as far as possible on the existing EU and regional reports as well as national contributions.
2. A gaps and needs analysis, based as far as possible on the existing methodologies and processes, such as vulnerability assessments conducted by the European Border and Coast Guard, and within existing processes such as the Brdo process.
3. Factors and indicators determining a crisis situation.
4. Necessary measures to be taken in a crisis situation including civil-military cooperation taking into account the respective national competences and capabilities as well as EU and international law.
5. A proposal for a coordination mechanism which could serve as an additional instrument apart from activities to be undertaken in the framework of the European Union aiming at supporting partners in need of support, e.g. through possible future operations making use of the European Border and Coast Guard.

Based on the proposed action plan, the Ministers will instruct their respective experts and further discuss the topic in all relevant fora.