



## **Salzburg Forum Ministerial Conference**

**Bucharest, 16 November 2022**

### **JOINT DECLARATION**

#### **of the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum**

Upon the invitation of the Romanian Chairmanship, the Ministers of Interior of the Salzburg Forum Member States met in Bucharest, on 15-16 of November 2022, in the presence of the Czech Republic exceptionally in the observing role as the Presidency of the Council of the EU.

In addition to the Member States of the Salzburg Forum, the conference was attended by the Ministers and high level representatives of the Western Balkans countries, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Also, at the initiative of the Romanian Chairmanship, Germany was invited with the aim to ensure better complementarity and coordination with the other relevant cooperation formats in the region.

The ministers point out the need to properly utilize already existent regional cooperation formats and avoid duplication in order to make the best use of available resources.

The Salzburg Forum Ministerial Conference provided a great opportunity for extensive discussions of the ministers with representatives of the European Commission, Europol, UNHCR, IOM, ICMPD, SELEC, PCC SEE, EUAA, FRONTEX and JCP - Joint Coordination Platform.

The Ministers took note of the technical meetings organized by Romania during its Chairmanship and the fruitful discussions and ideas aimed to strengthen cooperation both within the Forum and with third country partners in order to better address the new threats to the security and safety of their citizens.

The participating Ministers and representatives agreed on the main items on the agenda as follows:

***Preparation for possible developments of the military aggression of the Russian Federation in Ukraine – the humanitarian and the security perspectives***

The Ministers of Interior of the Salzburg Forum noted that, from the beginning of the military aggression of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, the EU has shown remarkable solidarity and quick and concrete support has been provided for people fleeing the conflict. Access to social benefits, education, employment and healthcare remains to be ensured. Since February 2022, more than 100 requests for assistance related to the war in Ukraine and its impact in neighboring countries were received and rescEU of the EUCPM capabilities were mobilized to fill the gaps with personal protective equipment, medical items from medical stockpiling capacities and CBRNe equipment.

The Ministers noted that, in addition to the humanitarian crisis, food and energy security, high attention must be paid to threats to internal security emerging from the conflict, with a special focus on prevention of trafficking in human beings, countering firearms trafficking, cybersecurity, protection of critical infrastructure and spread of disinformation.

The Ministers agreed that long term solutions are needed, in order to face new challenges that may arise along the way. Mainly due to the upcoming winter, countries must be prepared for any possible deterioration of the situation causing further displacements of people within and outside Ukraine. Bearing in mind the recent escalating rhetoric of Russian officials, additional measures and actions need to be considered with a view to reduce the risk of CBRNe incidents and to increase the response capacity to major incidents in this regard.

***Overlapping migratory flows – challenges and perspectives***

The Ministers acknowledged that the war against Ukraine has secondary implications that go beyond the humanitarian crisis, and these might have a severe impact on the main countries of origin and transit resulting in the increase of irregular migratory flows towards the EU, in the medium and long term.

The Ministers underlined that beyond addressing the root causes of irregular migration, the tackling of the challenges posed by irregular migration flows has to remain a priority. Notably in case of cooperation with the Western Balkan partners, developing of national reception and protection capacities, improving border management, return and readmission procedures, as well as the alignment of their visa regimes should be the guiding principle of joint efforts.

The Ministers noted that another important aspect in handling issues related to migration is the fight against migrants smuggling and the strengthened actions aiming to address this phenomenon.

The support of relevant EU JHA agencies, particularly Europol and EUCPM remains essential in this regard and also cooperation with other entities and organizations active in this area should be actively sought.

The Ministers highlighted the importance to remain vigilant and to continue overall preparedness at national and regional level.

***Identification of the regional cooperation needs and measures that can be taken to maintain security and stability in the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova***

The Ministers underlined the support that the Member States continue to offer to the Western Balkans region and to the Republic of Moldova in their efforts to mitigate the impact of the military aggression against Ukraine. The Western Balkans and Republic of Moldova were integrated into EU food and energy security initiatives in response to the war and have been invited to participate in the EU's joint purchases of energy.

The Ministers agreed that it is important to move forward with the EU integration of the Western Balkans, as candidate countries and potential candidates, based on their own merits in fulfilling the accession criteria, and taking into account their support in tackling the actual and new threats to the security and safety both of their citizens and the EU. The Ministers also underlined their commitment to support Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova as candidate countries on their EU accession path.

The Ministers underlined that transnational organized crime in the Western Balkans remains a strong threat, whether in terms of migrant smuggling or trafficking in human beings, drugs and weapons. Working together in regional, EU and international formats, the partners in southeast Europe registered relevant progress in many areas of countering organized crime.

***Overview of the Romanian Chairmanship of the Salzburg Forum***

The Ministers took note of the results of expert level meetings and the Heads of Police and Border Police meetings held over the past six months.

The Romanian Chairmanship of the Salzburg Forum expressed its appreciation for the support formulated in this format for a positive decision related to Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia's Schengen accession in December 2022.

Having in mind the fruitful discussions and the interest shown by the participants at the Expert Working Group on the “Management of consequences of the Russian aggression against Ukraine”, organized in October 2022 at the headquarters of the Romanian Gendarmerie, the Romanian Chairmanship of Salzburg Forum launched the proposal to extend the format of future technical discussions at expert level, by including new fields of interest like civil protection and gendarmerie, aiming to have a more comprehensive assessment of the emerging threats and of measures to be taken in order to prevent future crises.

The ministers endorsed the idea to extend the working format of the Salzburg Forum also to other areas of internal affairs, as mentioned before, in order to have an integrated, inter-agency, approach in the prevention and management of crisis.

### ***The incoming Slovak Chairmanship of the Salzburg Forum***

The Ministers welcomed the priorities of the incoming Slovak Chairmanship and expressed their commitment to continue working together effectively on issues of common interest in the framework of the Salzburg Forum.