



REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR



SALZBURG FORUM MINISTERIAL MEETING

15 - 17 November 2011

RIU Pravets Resort, Bulgaria

JOINT DECLARATION

On the occasion of their ministerial meeting under the Bulgarian Presidency on 16 November 2011 in Pravets, the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum states and the Republic of Croatia as an Observer (hereinafter referred to as “the Ministers”),

Welcoming the upcoming accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union and, consequently, receiving the Full Member status in the Salzburg Forum,

Reiterating their commitment to the successful implementation of the Vision 2020 and the Work Programme of the Trio Presidency (Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic) for the period 1 January 2011 – 30 June 2012,

Recognising the importance of the Salzburg Forum as a flexible and informal initiative on internal security, and yet an effective instrument for strategic and practical cooperation,

Committed to continue their contribution to strengthening the common European area of freedom, security and justice,

Have agreed on the following:

Future of the Schengen Area and Border Management

Reiterating that facilitating the free movement of persons and the creation of an area without internal border control, complemented by close judicial and police cooperation, is one of the main achievements of the European integration, the Ministers support the efforts aimed at improvement of the mechanisms for governance of the Schengen area, in line with the Treaties of the EU.

The Salzburg Forum states are ready to contribute to the enhancement of border management and border security at EU level, *inter alia* by supporting *Smart borders*

initiative, in order to ensure fast and swift border crossing of passengers, while guaranteeing an adequate level of security. The Ministers underline the need for cost-efficiency and operational added value when introducing new systems requiring significant investments, adequate data protection, as well as access by the law enforcement authorities to the data bases of the future systems

Reiterating their belief that the current discussions on the proposed legislative package on strengthening Schengen governance will lead to a better functioning and enhanced security of the Schengen area, based on the correct application of commonly agreed rules by all Member States, the Ministers encourage further discussions aimed at strengthening the area of justice, freedom and security, active cooperation between the Member States and more effective Schengen evaluation system, based on mutual trust.

Furthermore, the Ministers recall the Joint Declaration of Kitzbühel of June 2011, in which the Ministers agreed that a mechanism of gradual measures should be introduced in order to respond to exceptional circumstances putting the overall functioning of Schengen cooperation at risk, without jeopardising the principle of free movement of persons. The mechanism should include exceptional reintroduction of border controls as a last resort, if a Member State is no longer able to comply with its obligations under the Schengen rules. In case when this exceptional measure has to be applied, due consideration should be paid, among others, to the additional burden on the Member States concerned. The mechanism should be introduced without prejudice to the existing options available to Member States under the Schengen Borders Code.

In addition, recalling the Council Conclusions of 9 June 2011 on completion of the process of evaluation of the state of preparedness of Bulgaria and Romania to implement all provisions of the Schengen acquis, the Ministers urge for the final completion of the procedure on the Schengen accession of Bulgaria and Romania as soon as possible, by achieving a mutually acceptable solution, in compliance with the Treaties and the Schengen acquis.

Counteraction to Corruption in EU Member States

Taking into account the Communication of the Commission from 6 June 2011 on fighting corruption in the EU and the establishment of an EU anti-corruption reporting mechanism for periodic assessment, as well as the necessity to improve the coherence of anti-corruption policies and actions taken by Member States, the Ministers agree that there is a need for harmonised statistical methodology, in order to get a real and complete picture of the state of play and dynamics of corruption practices, as well as assessment of the trends.

The Ministers share the opinion that this harmonised statistical methodology should be based on a single catalogue of corruption offenses (offenses committed intentionally) defined in the relevant legal instruments of the UN, Council of Europe, OECD and the EU (Framework Decision).

In this regard the Ministers agree that the Commission should be invited to speed up the setting up of a sub-group of experts in the field of statistics, which should start working on the development of harmonised statistical methodology as soon as possible, in order to prepare a comprehensive and objective EU Anti-corruption Report in 2013.

The Ministers share the opinion that training is an important component of the counteraction to corruption. In this context they welcome the “European Anti-Corruption Training - EACT”, performed by Austria, Slovakia and Slovenia. The Ministers also promote the further development of the International Anti-Corruption Academy and its initiatives and will fully support the Academy as a key global anti-corruption player.

Cyber Security and Cybercrime

Confirming that ensuring cyber security and counteraction to cybercrime are issues of vital importance in the 21st century, the Salzburg Forum states are committed to contribute to the successful implementation of the strategic goals and the currently prepared Operational Action Plan for this priority of the EU Policy Cycle 2011-2013.

The Ministers express their support for the Communication of the European Commission on the Internal Security Strategy as regards cyberspace and await their swift implementation and call on the European Commission to take the necessary steps.

In particular, the Ministers reiterate their Joint declaration of Kitzbühel from June 2011 that the establishment of the European Cybercrime Center (ECC) should remain a strategic priority and that the ECC should be hosted by Europol and become the focal point in the fight against cybercrime in the Union contributing to faster reactions in the event of cyber attacks. In this regard the Ministers are looking forward to the proposals of the Commission for the establishment of the ECC.

Taking into account the EU initiatives on cyber security and cybercrime up to now, the Ministers underline that it is essential to consolidate on-going work and to support existing processes.

The Ministers take note of the first SEE Regional Conference on Cyber Security and Cybercrime which was held on 19-21 October 2011 in Sofia, in the framework of the Bulgarian SF Presidency, and support the establishment of a regional platform facilitating cybercrime counteraction in SEE.

They consider the implementation of the aims of the regional platform as a possibility to work together with their friends from the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova and the other participating SEE countries in this important area, in order to promote further the exchange of best practices, including the necessary flow of knowledge and exchange of information at all levels - national, regional, EU and global.

Implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region

Reiterating the commitment of their states to the effective implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube region, and its priority area 11 "Security" in particular, the Ministers confirm their support for achieving the strategic goals - improving information exchange, fostering cooperation between law-enforcement authorities, strengthening the rule of law and fight against corruption.

In this regard interested Salzburg Forum states express their willingness to participate actively in the implementation of the Strategy by ensuring high-level political support; developing and implementing effective and integrated macro-regional projects; sharing professional experience and promoting best practices; holding regular meetings for mutual informing of progress achieved.

Cross-border Enforcement of Road Safety Related Traffic Offences

Confirming their commitment to the development of a multilateral agreement on facilitating cross-border enforcement of road safety related traffic offences, the Ministers take note of the major progress achieved by the experts from their countries in drafting such document during three CBE workshops held in the period September-November 2011.

The Ministers reiterate their will to continue the joint activities in this important area by signing a *Memorandum of Understanding on Enhancement of Cooperation in the Field of Road Safety and Facilitating Cross-border Enforcement of Road Safety Related Traffic Offences*. They agree on joint measures for the implementation of the CBE Directive, including ensuring the earliest possible beginning of data exchange between their competent authorities under the CBE Directive and setting up of a peer group for mutual support.

The Ministers agree to take the necessary measures for launching formal negotiations on the draft CBE Agreement with the aim to have the instrument open for signing preferably by the end of the first half of 2012.

The Ministers agree also to encourage their competent authorities to perform other joint activities in the field of road safety on bilateral and multilateral basis, where appropriate and on a voluntary basis.

Witness Protection

The Ministers take note of the progress achieved during the consultations on expert level on the draft Agreement on cooperation in the area of witness protection held at the last meeting of the WG on Witness Protection in September 2011 in Bulgaria.

They agree to speed up the internal procedures for obtaining mandate for formal negotiations on the text and launching the negotiations during the forthcoming Czech SF Presidency with the aim to sign a legally binding instrument for active cooperation in this important area.

Enhanced Cooperation between the SF states and the Group of the Friends from the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova

The Ministers welcome the continuous efforts of their friends from the Western Balkans in the framework of the Post-visa liberalisation monitoring mechanism, as well as the efforts of the Republic of Moldova in the framework of the visa liberalisation dialogue. They encourage the Western Balkan states to take additional measures in order to avoid developments, endangering the overall positive assessment of the visa liberalisation process.

Taking into account the recent concerns on the increase of the illegal migration flows, *inter alia* through the Western Balkans to the EU, the Ministers are ready to continue to work actively with their friends from the Western Balkans on implementing concrete common measures, including cross-border operational tools such as Joint Investigation Teams and Joint Border Operations, in order to address the problems in depth, and to intensify further the cooperation in targeted manner.

In this regard, the Ministers welcome the initiative started by Austria and Hungary at EU level and the cooperation with Serbia. Furthermore, a widening of the initiative to include other partners is expressly supported.

Reiterating their commitment to cooperate actively with their friends from the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova in the fight against all forms of cross-border organised crime, the Ministers encourage the implementation of the existing instruments and mechanisms for cooperation. They emphasise the importance of the direct contacts between the responsible authorities with similar competences responsible for the implementation of different forms of police cooperation, in order to identify the concrete partners, to build mutual trust and to reach efficient interaction. To this end, the Ministers support, *inter alia*, the Austrian initiative "Police Equal Performance" (PEP) aiming at strengthening internal security in Central and Southeast Europe through enhanced and more efficient police cooperation.

The Ministers welcome the priorities of the upcoming Czech Presidency and express their determination to continue the fruitful cooperation on issues of mutual interest in the framework of the Salzburg Forum.

Pravets, 16 November 2011