

SALZBURG FORUM MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

14 June 2016

Dubrovnik, Republic of Croatia

JOINT DECLARATION

The Ministers of the Interior of the Salzburg Forum Member States met on 14 June 2016 in Dubrovnik, Republic of Croatia, for the Salzburg Forum Ministerial Conference under the Croatian Salzburg Forum Presidency.

The Conference also gathered respective Ministers of the Interior from the states belonging to the Group of Friends from the Western Balkans and Moldova as well as the Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship and representatives of the Commission, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the European Police Office (Europol), the European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice (eu-LISA), the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex), the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), the Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe (PCC SEE) Secretariat, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC).

Special guests of the conference were the ministerial delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands as the Presidency holder of the Council of the European Union, and Kosovo*.

The main challenges discussed by the Ministers were as follows:

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

Migration - Exchange of Information and Cooperation

The Ministers reaffirmed that a functional framework for effective migration management may only be created and remain sustainable by a common and systematic approach at the European level.

The Ministers expressed the view that the existing cooperation must be reinforced through efficient exchange of information and transfer of experiences, lessons learned and good practices in the field of migration management, as well as integration. In this context, the importance of the Declaration “Managing Migration Together” of 24 February 2016, where some of the SF Member States participated, was mentioned.

The Ministers exchanged views on the need to reform common European policies in the field of migration and asylum. They considered the reform necessary in order to establish a system that is able to prevent severe migration flows and pressure, filter the abuses effectively, and provide protection to those in genuine need thereof. Such a system should comprehensively reinforce the capacities of the entire EU resilience to tackle uncontrolled migration influx that may occur in the future. Discouraging secondary movements along with providing full respect for high standards in the security and public order issues in the Member States should also be taken into consideration.

The Ministers underlined the importance of preventing migrants and asylum seekers from entering into the EU through illegal routes, and welcomed the implementation of measures from the common concept of the Alliance on Current Challenges in the Area of Migration. As an implementation of the Alliance on Current Challenges in the Area of Migration, a workshop will be held by Austria together with EASO on 15 and 16 June 2016 with the aim of defining a joint communication approach with regard to the countries of origin and the migrants coming from these countries. The countries invited include the affected countries along the route from the Salzburg Forum as well as other countries along the route.

The Ministers agreed that cooperation with third countries (countries of origin and transit for illegal migration) in the field of migration should be enhanced.

Regarding the efficient fight against smuggling of and trafficking in human beings in connection to migration flows, the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum stressed the importance of a proactive exchange of information on criminal

networks. To this end, they agreed that they would use to full extent the capacities of Europol, the newly established Joint Operational Office (JOO) in Vienna, other tools at the EU and regional level, as well as the established informal network of the Salzburg Forum and the Group of Friends.

Challenges in Future Border Management

The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of ongoing contacts between the countries of the Salzburg Forum and the countries of South-east Europe at the highest level in connection with trends and possible fragmentation of illegal migrant routes. Permanent contacts are an important prerequisite for taking timely measures for effective border control also taking into consideration that the situation could quickly change and that any country could face additional pressure at its borders.

The Ministers welcomed the progress made with regard to the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Border and Coast Guard and repealing Regulation (EC) No 2007/2004, Regulation (EC) No 863/2007 and Council Decision 2005/267/EC, and appreciated the efforts of the Dutch presidency, which were reflected in the rapid preparation and discussion within the Council.

The Ministers stressed that the security of the external borders and better management thereof are crucial for maintaining the internal security of the EU. In order to achieve this, interoperability of the information systems is also required. Therefore, they welcomed the initiative of the European Commission for stronger and smarter border and security information systems in order to achieve the long-term goal which is to improve interoperability of information systems, confirmed earlier by the EU Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs, as well by the representatives of EU institutions in their Joint Statement of 24 March 2016 on the terrorist attacks in Brussels. The Ministers strongly emphasized the need for finding an adequate solution for those countries which are not yet fully applying the Schengen acquis, in accordance with their respective Accession Acts, in order to grant them access to VIS but also to all functionalities of SIS, taking into account their significant role in strengthening the security of EU external borders.

The Fight against Terrorism

Terrorist threats are one of the most serious threats to European security and represent an attack on the principles of fundamental freedom, democracy, rule of law and fundamental human rights. In light of the adoption of the Directive (EU) 2016/681 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the use of passenger name record (PNR) data for the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences and serious crime the Ministers stressed the importance of cooperation and exchange of experience for the purpose of a full and timely implementation of this Directive.

The Ministers of the Salzburg Forum emphasized the need for the most efficient cooperation according to EU legislation with the European Counter Terrorism Centre within Europol, optimizing the use of available databases at the European Union and Interpol level, the full implementation of sanction regimes and active participation in the exchange of data.

Furthermore, the Ministers agreed on the need to focus on prevention of terrorism, in particular combating radicalisation and violent extremism which could lead to terrorism. The organisation of joint meetings of counter-terrorism experts, training of police officers and exchange of best practices in the framework of police cooperation and the implementation of the »Western Balkans Counter-Terrorism« initiative (WBCTi) will intensify efforts to create an effective prevention mechanism.

In this context, the Ministers reiterated that the fight against terrorism requires a three-tier approach: shaping – preventing – reacting as stated in the “Vienna Declaration – Tackling Violent Extremism and Terrorism” from 20 March 2015 as well as in the Salzburg Forum Ministerial Declaration of St. Pölten in 2015. The Conference of Interior and Foreign Ministers “Shaping our Common Future” at the end of 2016 in Sarajevo is a follow-up to the Conference in Vienna.

Schengen Enlargement

The Ministers reiterated the long-standing support of the Salzburg Forum Member States for the Schengen accession of Bulgaria and Romania.

The Ministers agreed to support the Republic of Croatia in its effort towards joining the Schengen area.

Regional Development and Protection Programme for Ukraine

The Ministers shared concerns about the situation in Ukraine and the constantly growing number of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and supported the proposal of the Czech Republic to establish a Regional Development and Protection Programme for Ukraine aimed at developing durable solutions for IDPs, refugees and asylum seekers in Ukraine.

Overview of the Croatian Presidency of the Salzburg Forum

The Ministers took note of the meetings held during the Croatian Presidency of the Salzburg Forum with a focus on current issues that are common throughout Europe and the neighbouring countries: Workshop on strengthening cooperation in the field of border control, illegal migration and asylum (17 to 18 February 2016, Zagreb), Meeting of the heads of the national units for combating human smuggling and trafficking in human beings (22 to 23 March 2016, Valbandon), Meeting of the General Police Directors of the Salzburg Forum (31 March 2016, Sofia, Republic of Bulgaria), and the Meeting of Witness Protection working group (24 to 25 May 2016, Valbandon). The Ministers welcomed the achieved results.

Upcoming Czech Presidency of the Salzburg Forum

The Ministers welcomed and endorsed the priorities of the upcoming Czech Presidency and expressed their determination to continue the successful cooperation on issues of mutual interest within the framework of the Salzburg Forum.

Upcoming Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union

The Ministers welcomed the priorities of the upcoming Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union and expressed their commitment to support the Slovak Republic in achieving its goals.



Dubrovnik, 14 June 2016