

An Extraordinary Summit of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrád Group Countries

Prague, 15 February 2016

Prague Declaration (joint statement on the 25th V4 anniversary)

The 'Declaration on Cooperation between the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Hungary in Striving for European Integration', signed in Visegrád exactly 25 years ago – on 15 February 1991 – largely contributed to the progress of Central Europe whose notion was reborn with the fall of the iron curtain and the end of the Cold War reunifying Europe. Only thirteen years later, the accession of the Visegrád Countries (V4) to the European Union in 2004 was a momentous step. The following developments have proved that the V4 needed the EU as much as the EU needed the Visegrád Countries.

During the past 25 years, the Visegrád Group has developed a close and strong cooperation based on shared values and interests. Through their membership in the EU and NATO, the Visegrád Countries contributed to the economic and political integration of Europe and promoted the stability and security of the continent. The V4 has globally become a well-established brand and a respected and reliable partner in meeting the challenges facing the Euro-Atlantic world.

In the past 25 years, we have also learnt that every achievement requires continual work and effort. While at the time of our accession no one doubted that the EU was and will be a united and prosperous community, today we are celebrating this anniversary amid a different mood: one of identity-seeking and the re-thinking of our common goals. The EU and NATO are no longer mere anchors and guarantors of our well-being but are a strong part of our shared identity for which our countries feel responsible.

By our accession Europe became united. We are aware of the risks and negative consequences of any potentially emerging new dividing lines in Europe. We are determined to work actively and resolutely to prevent such new dividing lines to emerge. We are convinced that all our European partners share our determination and are ready to act together with us in that spirit.

We have worked to create an atmosphere of partnership, trust, mutual respect and solidarity amongst our four countries. In our future efforts, we will aim to continue to broaden and

strengthen the Visegrád bonds within and outside the EU and, through a strong V4, to promote further strengthening of the EU.

We have unequivocally advocated for the EU enlargement as a means of expanding the area of stability and prosperity. It should be considered our moral duty, as countries which have used the opportunities opened by our own memberships, to keep the doors to the EU open for future candidates.

In the last 25 years we have achieved a deep political and economic transformation in our countries. We want to continue to offer our knowledge and experience as well as our financial contributions to assist in the transformations of other countries in transition, such as of the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership.

We have also managed to achieve a unique quality of effective and flexible cooperation in the V4 without the unnecessary increase of institutionalization. Our only permanent institution - the International Visegrád Fund (IVF) - plays an important role within the V4 as well as for our external partners. We will continue to use the IVF to enhance the cohesion of the Visegrád Group as well as to contribute to the reform processes of our partners in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries.

Recent developments - whose common denominator is the challenging of peace, security and prosperity of EU citizens - demand a joint response from all European allies. We draw the lessons from our own experience of how dangerous weakening of European unity may be. We want European integration to help its Member States to achieve their objectives. This is why we actively work to keep the European Union dynamic and flexible based on its traditional quality of "unity in diversity". This is why we continuously advocate preserving our common achievements which contribute to the further economic development of our countries and to the increase of the well-being of our citizens. We consider the deepening of the European integration crucially important. That is why we are determined to contribute to its strengthening and proper functioning. We want the European Union to be strong and a stronger European Union needs a strong Visegrád Group.

Just as 25 years ago, the Visegrád Group countries today are as dedicated members of the Euro-Atlantic community. Through their joint work and effort, they have and will continue to make Europe stronger, more prosperous and more democratic.