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NOTE

From: Hungarian delegation
To: Council

Subject: Salzburg Forum Ministerial Conference
Mátraháza, Hungary, 11 and 12 October 2012
- Joint Declaration

Delegations will find attached the joint declaration adopted at the Salzburg Forum Ministerial Conference which was held on 10 - 11 October 2012 in Mátraháza (Hungary).

SALZBURG FORUM MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

10-11 OCTOBER 2012, MÁTRAHÁZA/HUNGARY

JOINT DECLARATION

Following the conclusion of the Trio Presidency of Austria, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic having implemented the first ever 18-month programme of the Salzburg Forum from 1 January 2011 to 30 June 2012, as of 1 July 2012 Hungary, Poland and Romania took up the Trio Presidency of the Salzburg Forum.

The Ministers responsible for Home Affairs met on 10-11 October 2012 in Mátraháza under the Hungarian Presidency of the Salzburg Forum. The Salzburg Forum Member States were honoured to host the EU Commissioner for Home Affairs and the Deputy Director of Europol. The overall objective of the meeting was to exchange views on key issues on the EU agenda in order to identify common positions on the respective strategic topics, to further enhance regional cooperation as well as to intensify the platform of the “Friends of the Salzburg Forum”. The Ministers thereby adopted the new 18-month Work Programme which will guide their cooperation from 1 July 2012 to 31 December 2013 and expressed their strong commitment to fully implement it.

At the conference the Ministers agreed on the followings:

The security of the Schengen area

With a view to the ongoing and future talks between the involved institutions, and realising the useful role that could be played by the Salzburg Forum in identifying those principles that should be respected in further negotiations, the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum, in the presence of the European Commissioner for Home Affairs held a discussion on the most important policy objectives of the Schengen governance package, to identify possibilities to move forward. The Ministers declared their willingness to actively contribute to this discussion in finding a mutually acceptable solution.

The Ministers recalled the general approach adopted by the JHA Council in June 2012 on the future of the Schengen governance, substantially modifying the original Commission draft proposals on the new Schengen evaluation mechanism and on the common rules on the temporary reintroduction of border control at the internal borders in exceptional circumstances.

There was a common understanding that a compromise solution is necessary to find a way out of the current deadlock and Ministers welcomed the decision of the European Parliament to resume the discussions, at technical level, on the Schengen governance package.

The Ministers remain concerned with regard to the uncertain time framework for the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the Schengen area.

Funding home affairs within the new multiannual financial framework

The Ministers welcomed that the new Multiannual Financial Framework for the period of 2014-2020 was put on the agenda of the ministerial meeting. They strongly supported the objective simplifying of the financial instruments in home affairs by means of a two-pillar system. The Ministers welcomed this new system as a significant step in the field of home affairs' funding and expected a more effective EU action in this field. They called for closer consultations on this crucial issue while having also referred to the previous initiative of Poland on distribution keys. The Ministers strongly supported the idea to identify certain key issues as a common position of the Salzburg Forum.

The Ministers emphasised that the new Multiannual Financial Framework for the period of 2014-2020 shall also facilitate the implementation of the goals set by the European Council in the "Internal security strategy for the European Union" and foster in particular operational cooperation by effectively supporting Member States' endeavours within the Policy cycle. Regarding the Internal Security Fund the Ministers also acknowledged the importance of inverse GDP as a factor in distribution keys. They were of the opinion that cooperation with third countries should remain among the eligible actions by national programmes in all financial instruments for home affairs.

They shared the view that supporting the acquisition, further upgrading and to certain extent maintenance of the infrastructure including IT systems in the Internal Security Fund is also important. The Ministers reiterated their support regarding a division of 70-30% of the global resources of the Fund between the National Programmes and the centrally managed part as a compromise solution.

Trafficking in human beings

The Ministers confirmed that human trafficking is one of the gravest violations of human rights while being one of the most serious forms of organised crime. Consequently, it is of utmost importance to tackle this phenomenon at national, regional and European level. Recent European and regional initiatives have been discussed and acknowledged by the Ministers. The conclusion has been reached that the Salzburg Forum should play a role when facilitating communication in relation to countering human trafficking between countries of South Eastern Europe and the European institutions. Furthermore, it was agreed that the Salzburg Forum, as a joint voice of regional interests, will support the implementation of the currently existing European documents on the fight against human trafficking and be active to influence future policy making. The Ministers also addressed human trafficking, whereby victims and traffickers are EU citizens. They shared the view that it is often obscured by disputes around breaches of administrative rules of prostitution or labour law. They agreed that more attention should be paid to the return and reintegration of trafficked persons being EU citizens and argued for stronger cooperation between the countries concerned on both ends of the trafficking chain and more frequent use of joint investigation teams.

Confiscation of the proceeds of crime and asset recovery

The Ministers agreed that deprivation of property acquired on the wrong side of the law is one of the key tools in the effective fight against organised crime. Asset detection and recovery as well as setting up the appropriate mechanisms for confiscation of all illegally obtained values are top priorities in almost every national or EU level strategic document. The Ministers were of the view that recommendations of the fifth round of mutual evaluation are acceptable by and large, however some urgent steps are not easy to implement and many of them require actions at the national level.

The Ministers agreed on the necessity to further study the advantages of a centralized bank account register. They also agreed to take into account the resources needed.

The Ministers confirmed that the regulatory framework, the capacities and qualities of the operational staff for property detection and securing as well as the mutual cooperation on national, EU and international level can be improved. They expressed their commitment to make further efforts to explore and use alternative and complementary approaches and instruments to prevent and fight organised crime. The Ministers supported that Salzburg Forum countries should enhance their future cooperation in this field e.g. by exchange of their best practices and joint project proposals aiming at the transfer of knowledge and awareness of these practices in the region.

Cross-border Enforcement of the Road Safety Related Traffic Offences

The Ministers welcomed the signing of the Agreement between the Republic of Bulgaria, the Republic of Croatia, Hungary and the Republic of Austria on Facilitating Cross-border Enforcement of the Road Safety Related Traffic Offences and the further steps envisaged by the signatories in order to implement the provisions of it as soon as possible. The Ministers considered this process in which all Salzburg Forum Member States participated as an innovative and pioneering exercise that may bring along benefits for all of them. Furthermore, the Ministers remained committed that the issue of regional cooperation in road safety will continue to be high on the Salzburg Forum's agenda, both in practical and administrative terms, keeping also in mind the obligation to implement Directive 2011/82/EU by November 2013 at the latest.

Common steps against illegal migration

The Ministers agreed that the enhanced region-wide cooperation and coordination of ongoing and planned initiatives, processes and activities are essential with a view to ensuring synergies between policies, programmes, instruments and actions while avoiding overlaps in the region.

They agreed to set up a regional contact list among the relevant authorities of the Salzburg Forum states, the Western Balkan countries and the Republic of Moldova, in order to improve the practical cooperation and exchange of information to prevent and combat illegal migration ensuring the implementation of the activities in the EU Action on Migratory Pressures (no italic).

The Ministers encouraged their Friends from the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova to identify concrete requests and needs in order to address the challenges of illegal and mixed migration flows across their countries during the Hungarian Presidency of the Salzburg Forum and reiterated their commitment to support their Friends from the Western Balkans countries and the Republic of Moldova in the identification of their requests and needs for further developing their migration and asylum systems and strengthening border control.

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region

The Ministers took note of the recent developments in the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and in particular its area on security and welcomed the commitment of Bulgaria as Priority Area 11 Coordinator contributing to the successful achievement of the goals of the EUSDR.

They gave their firm support to the implementation of the Hungarian (Danube Law Enforcement Coordination Centre), the Romanian (Comprehensive Assessment on the Danube) and the Austrian (Police River Information System - PORIS) projects to which the “Letter of Recommendation” was granted by the Steering Group at its third meeting on 19 June 2012 in Munich. The Salzburg Forum countries were encouraged to join those projects they are interested in.

The Ministers welcomed the signing of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Government of Hungary on the operation of the Danube Law Enforcement Coordination Centre which shall be open for accession by other interested states along the Danube.

Cyber Security and fight against cyber crime

The Ministers welcomed the different initiatives to enhance cyber security and to fight cybercrime in the region. They took note of the conclusions of the Budapest Cyberspace Conference which was held on 4-5 October 2012. They also look forward to the second regional forum on cyber security and cybercrime for the Southeast European countries to take place on 21-24 October 2012 in Sofia. Within the competences of the Ministries of Interior of the Salzburg Forum countries the Salzburg Forum will contribute to the efforts of drawing-up an “EU Strategy on Cyber Security” and the Ministers supported the idea to examine and discuss the relation between Cyber Security and Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) in the future.

Witness Protection

The Ministers welcomed the fact that Poland, upon agreement of all other signatories, signed the Agreement on the Cooperation in the Area of Witness Protection on 11 October 2012.

Polish Presidency of the Salzburg Forum

The Ministers welcomed the priorities of the upcoming Polish Presidency of the Salzburg Forum and reiterated their full commitment to continue the close cooperation on issues of mutual interest under the umbrella of the Salzburg Forum.

Mátraháza, 11 October 2012
