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**Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit,
Vilnius, 28-29 November 2013**

Eastern Partnership: the way ahead

The Heads of State or Government and the representatives of the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, the representatives of the European Union and the Heads of State or Government and representatives of its Member States have met in Vilnius on 28-29 November 2013. The President of the European Parliament and representatives of the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities of the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP) and the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly were also present at the Summit.

The Prague Summit in May 2009 launched a strategic and ambitious Eastern Partnership, as a specific dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy, to further support the sustainable reform processes of all Eastern European countries, States participating in the Eastern Partnership, with a view to accelerating the political association and economic integration of interested partners with the European Union (EU). The agenda agreed in Prague and Warsaw contains the guiding principles of the Eastern Partnership. The participants of the Vilnius Summit re-confirm their commitment to implement them fully.

P R E S S

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The participants of the Vilnius Summit reviewed the considerable progress made in the Partnership since the September 2011 Warsaw Summit bringing Eastern European partners closer to the EU and agreed on an ambitious agenda for the way ahead. In this context, they stressed the crucial necessity of implementing agreed commitments, in particular on political, economic and social reforms.

The Summit participants reaffirm the importance they attach to the Eastern Partnership founded on mutual interests and commitments as well as on shared ownership, responsibility, differentiation and mutual accountability. The Partnership is based on commitments to the principles of international law and to fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as to market economy, sustainable development and good governance. All countries participating in the Eastern Partnership are committed to these values and principles of international law through the relevant international instruments and any EU Member State is also committed to them through the Treaty of the European Union.

While recognising and welcoming the progress that has been made, they also recall that much remains to be done to tackle the persisting challenges posed to democracy, the respect for fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. In this regard, Summit participants underline that progress on respect for those common values will be essential notably through strengthening the efficiency and independence of the judiciary; effectively tackling corruption; and implementing public administration reform.

The Summit participants welcome the steps taken since the Warsaw Summit to strengthen the Eastern Partnership with the objective of building a common area of shared democracy, prosperity, stability and increased interactions and exchanges. Emphasizing the importance of developing strong ties between the EU and the Eastern European countries, the Summit participants agree that achieving closer cooperation is essential to ensure stability and prosperity on the European continent. The resolution of conflicts, building trust and good neighbourly relations are essential to economic and social development and cooperation in the region.

The participants of the Vilnius Summit warmly welcome the significant step forward achieved in establishing ambitious, new Association Agreements, including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTAs) between the EU and some partner countries. Today, following the recent finalisation of the respective negotiations, the EU-Republic of Moldova and EU-Georgia Association Agreements including DCFTAs have been initialled. The participants of the Vilnius Summit take note of the decision by the Ukrainian Government to suspend temporarily the process of preparations for signature of the Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area between the EU and Ukraine. They also take note of the unprecedented public support for Ukraine's political association and economic integration with the EU. The EU and Ukraine reiterate their commitment to the signing of this Agreement on the basis of determined action and tangible progress in the three areas emphasised at the 2013 EU-Ukraine Summit. To this end, important progress has already been achieved. These Association Agreements, including DCFTAs, are designed to support far reaching political and socio-economic reforms and facilitate comprehensive approximation towards the EU, its rules and standards. The participants of the Vilnius Summit welcome the progress made in the negotiations on an Association Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Azerbaijan and, building on existing bilateral contractual relations, call for progress to continue. The EU stands ready to launch negotiations on a DCFTA, as part of an Association Agreement, following Azerbaijan's accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The EU and Armenia have today reconfirmed their commitment to further develop and strengthen their cooperation in all areas of mutual interest within the Eastern Partnership framework, stressing the importance of reviewing and updating the existing basis of their relations. In the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership, the Summit participants reaffirm the sovereign right of each partner freely to choose the level of ambition and the goals to which it aspires in its relations with the European Union.

Enhancing mobility in a secure and well-managed environment remains a core objective of the Eastern Partnership. The participants of the Vilnius Summit warmly welcome the progress made by some partners towards Visa Liberalisation through the implementation of the Visa Liberalisation Action Plans. In this context they also welcome the conclusion and implementation of Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements.

The participants of the Vilnius Summit reaffirm their acknowledgement of the European aspirations and the European choice of some partners and their commitment to build deep and sustainable democracy. In this context, they take note of the commitment of those partners to pursue these objectives. The participants reaffirm the particular role for the Partnership to support those who seek an ever closer relationship with the EU. The Association Agreements, including DCFTAs, are a substantial step in this direction. Respect for the common values and implementation of Association Agreements will contribute to the future progressive developments in our relationship.

The participants of the Vilnius Summit set the following goals to be attained by the Partnership by 2015:

- Further deepening relations and cooperation between the EU and partners;
- Making further steps in strengthening democracy, guaranteeing respect of human rights and rule of law including through the pursuit of reform of the judiciary and strengthening law enforcement;
- Securing where applicable signature by Autumn 2014 and provisional application of the Association Agreements/DCFTAs thereby launching the implementation phase and ensure that the Agreements' ratification processes are well advanced;
- Establishing where applicable Association Agendas as soon as possible in 2014 as the means of preparing for and implementing the Association Agreements/DCFTAs and to serve as the key monitoring tool;
- Continuing to provide EU assistance to support partners' reform agendas including taking into account the provisional application and implementation of the Association Agreements including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas;
- Accession by the Eastern European partners concerned to the regional Convention on pan-Euro-Mediterranean preferential rules of origin and making progress towards their accession to the Common Transit Convention as further steps in the process of economic integration;
- Advancing through gradual steps towards visa free regimes, in due course on a case by case basis, provided that conditions for well-managed and secure mobility are in place;
- Strengthening the business dimension of the Eastern Partnership including through improving the business environment in partner countries to the benefit of local, regional and European SMEs and businesses;
- Gradually developing a Common Knowledge and Innovation Space to pull together several existing strands of cooperation in research and innovation;
- Further strengthening the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership;
- Seeking further regulatory approximation in all transport areas and implementing transport infrastructure projects, along the Eastern Partnership transport network through existing EU programmes and instruments, seeking closer involvement of European and International Financial Institutions and prioritizing projects that improve connections with the TEN-T core network;

- Promoting and strengthening strategic multilateral projects, through creating a conducive, transparent, regulatory, and financial environment for the implementation of projects of Common Interest and Projects of Energy Community Interests for the countries concerned.
- Further strengthening of public institutional capacity with support from the EU;
- Promoting and strengthening visible and effective multilateral Flagship Initiatives including where appropriate combining policy dialogue and support for infrastructure;
- Further strengthening people to people contacts – including through the opening of the new “Erasmus +”, ”Creative Europe” and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie strand within Horizon 2020 to the participants from the Eastern Partnership countries;
- Implementing a Visibility Strategy for the Eastern Partnership.

Summit participants stress that effective future implementation of Association Agreements and, where relevant, DCFTAs, accompanied by reforms will bring about the comprehensive approximation with EU legislation and standards leading to the gradual economic integration of partners in the EU internal market and therefore to the creation of an economic area. They undertake to review at the next Summit the possible further steps that could be taken to advance economic integration with a view to creating an economic area in light of implementation of the relevant parts of this Declaration and the Association Agreements / DCFTAs. To this end, the European Commission is invited, to conduct a feasibility study in due time. Summit participants agree that such an ambitious long-term vision for economic integration between partners and the EU is desirable – contributing also to the longer-term goal of a wider common area of economic prosperity based on WTO rules and sovereign choices throughout Europe and beyond.

The growing relationship between the EU and its Eastern European partners in particular in the field of economic integration can make a significant contribution to strengthening Europe's international competitiveness and to creating sustainable, inclusive, smart growth and jobs thereby enhancing stability.

Greater differentiation and mutual accountability will allow individual partners better to meet their aspirations and needs. The pace of reforms will continue to determine the intensity of cooperation and those partners most engaged in reforms will benefit most from their relationship with the EU, in line with the incentive based approach ("more-for-more") of the renewed European Neighbourhood Policy. Reinforced and sustainable reform efforts serve a common interest to help the Eastern European countries progress towards deep and sustainable democracies where good governance and the rule of law prevail with economies developing on market-based principles to underpin equitable and sustainable development. Summit participants underline that this ambitious agenda requires the engagement of the broader society and they therefore welcome the increased involvement of parliaments, civil society, local and regional authorities, business community and other relevant stakeholders in the Eastern Partnership agenda.

Summit participants agree the above general political guidelines for the Partnership in 2014-15. This declaration, together with the new Association Agendas and other existing and future documents guiding bilateral relations and Work Programmes of the multilateral Platforms, will constitute a clear plan of action for the Eastern Partnership in 2014-15.

Achievements in 2011 – 2013 and agenda for 2014 - 2015

Progress made from the Warsaw to the Vilnius Summit

1. The Vilnius Summit is a defining moment in the EU's relationship with Eastern European partners. The participants of the Vilnius Summit welcome the advances in the Eastern Partnership achieved since the Warsaw Summit in accelerating political association and economic integration, facilitating mobility in a well-managed and secure environment, strengthening the multilateral dimension and supporting sector cooperation. They acknowledge the role played by the Eastern Partnership Roadmap in guiding and monitoring the implementation of the objectives of the Eastern Partnership.
2. The Summit participants look forward to the conclusion as soon as possible in 2014 of Association Agendas with Georgia and the Republic of Moldova as instruments to prepare and facilitate the implementation of the Association Agreements and help create a comprehensive and practical framework through which political association and economic integration with the EU can be monitored and developed. They welcome the joint work carried out in implementing the Association Agenda with Ukraine.
3. The participants of the Vilnius Summit duly recognize the substantial efforts undertaken by partners in order to initiate and implement long term comprehensive modernisation reforms and their commitment to pursue them further. They express satisfaction about EU increased support to partner reforms through enhanced policy dialogues and cooperation, both at bilateral and multi-country level.

4. Summit participants welcome the significant financial commitment of €2.5bn of the EU during the 2010-13 period aimed at furthering democratic development and institution building, smart, sustainable and inclusive growth as well as economic development. Expressing support for the implementation of the incentive based approach, they note that significant additional resources were made available in 2012-13 to countries that made most progress in building deep and sustainable democracy. They acknowledge the major efforts carried out in key reform areas identified under the Comprehensive Institution Building (CIB) initiative and the important support being provided by the EU to this end. The participants of the Vilnius Summit express their satisfaction that the EIB stepped up its lending activity in the partner countries from € 170 million in 2008 to € 934 million last year and that the EBRD is enriching its continued support to private sector development and infrastructure renovation by policy dialogue and advice. They take positive note of the increased efforts of EU Member States in supporting the aims of the Eastern Partnership, including through bilateral development cooperation.

5. Mobility of citizens in a well-managed and secure environment is an important element of the Eastern Partnership. Visa liberalisation remains a shared objective of individual partner countries and the EU alike for the benefit of the population at large. The preparedness for a visa-free regime is to be assessed on a case-by-case basis provided that conditions for well-managed and secure mobility are in place. The first step of successfully implementing visa facilitation and readmission agreements has been achieved for several Eastern European partner countries. The participants of the Vilnius Summit welcome the conclusion of the Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements with the Republic of Armenia and look forward to their effective implementation. They look forward to the next steps towards increased mobility between the EU and Armenia. They welcome the signature today of the Visa Facilitation Agreement with the Republic of Azerbaijan and look forward to the imminent signature of the Readmission Agreement. They look forward to the next steps towards increased mobility between the EU and Azerbaijan. The participants of the Vilnius Summit also look ahead to the launch of negotiations of Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements with Belarus. They also encourage use of the flexibilities offered by the Visa Code. In this context, the participants of the Vilnius Summit welcome the achievements by the Republic of Moldova in fulfilling the benchmarks set out in its Visa Liberalisation Action Plan and the presentation of the European Commission's latest progress report in this regard. They take note of the European Commission's legislative proposal to amend EC Regulation 539/2001. They also welcome the substantial progress achieved by Ukraine towards the completion of the first phase of its Visa Liberalisation Action Plan and the very good progress made by Georgia in the process of implementing the first phase of its Visa Liberalisation Action Plan. They look forward to further progress in the Visa Liberalisation Dialogues with these countries. These Plans should serve as models for other partner countries who wish to engage in the visa liberalisation dialogues with the EU, bearing in mind the specificity and progress of each country.

6. The participants of the Vilnius Summit welcome the effective implementation of Mobility Partnerships in line with the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility with the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and the Republic of Armenia. They note that the evaluation of the EU - Republic of Moldova Mobility Partnership and the development of the Extended Migration Profile with this country have demonstrated the importance of evidence based policies in the field of migration, which could also guide cooperation in the framework of Mobility Partnerships between the EU and other Eastern Partnership countries. They also welcome the progress made with a view to concluding the Mobility Partnership with the Republic of Azerbaijan and look forward to its imminent signature and envisage establishing similar frameworks with other Eastern European partners. Recognising the importance of the Mobility Partnerships as the key bilateral framework in strengthening cooperation in the area of migration and mobility, the Summit participants call for even greater engagement of participating EU Member States and Eastern European partners in their effective implementation.
7. The participants of the Vilnius Summit welcome enhanced cooperation and the progress achieved in the area of freedom, security and justice as well as the outcome of the first Eastern Partnership Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial meeting held in Luxembourg on 7-8 October 2013. Effective implementation of reforms in this area will contribute to further development of cooperation between the EU and its partners. In the field of justice, large cooperation programmes have been launched and implemented in several countries contributing to the improvement of democratic governance.
8. The Vilnius Summit participants welcome the important increase of activities under the Eastern Partnership multilateral dimension including to complement bilateral dialogue and cooperation. They stress the importance of the engagement of Eastern Partnership actors in all the relevant activities of multilateral dimension of the Partnership. The Partnership's multilateral dimension has provided a valuable forum for sharing information on and experience of partner countries' steps towards transition, reform and modernisation. It has allowed partners to benefit from an additional channel to support reform efforts and facilitate approximation as appropriate. The Vilnius Summit participants welcome enhanced multilateral cooperation in areas such as: trade and economic cooperation, statistics, customs, tax, border management, energy, transport, environment and climate change, education, youth and training, culture, business environment including SME policies, disaster risk reduction, research and innovation, information society and media, agriculture and rural development, migration and asylum, public administration reforms, fight against corruption. In this regard, the participants of the Vilnius Summit welcome progress achieved in the implementation of cooperation initiatives, including the Flagship initiatives, which bring tangible benefits to citizens in partner countries.

9. Summit participants welcome the launching of informal Eastern Partnership dialogues and the three rounds successfully held to date (Chisinau, July 2012; Tbilisi, February 2013 and Yerevan, September 2013). This format has promoted regular, informal exchanges between Foreign Ministers both on the Eastern Partnership agenda and foreign policy issues of common concern and has advanced Eastern Partnership cooperation in key sectors through the engagement of the Ministers concerned from partner countries. They wish to deepen where appropriate political association and increase political and security policy convergence and effectiveness in the field of foreign policy.
10. The Summit participants highlight the importance of dialogue and cooperation in the field of foreign and security policy as a key component of enhancing political association between the EU and the interested partners. They welcome the launch of a CSDP (Common Security and Defence Policy) Panel to facilitate dialogue on developments concerning CSDP, including on CSDP crisis management operations and exercises. Moreover, under the Partnership bilateral dimension, the conclusion and implementation of CSDP Framework Participation Agreements provide partner countries with the legal basis and practical means to engage in EU-led crisis management operations. They welcome the contribution by Ukraine to a number of EU operations. The Summit participants welcome the signing and entry into force of the Framework Participation Agreement with the Republic of Moldova and its interest to participate in EU operations, welcome the signature today of the Framework Participation Agreement with Georgia and note that the launching of negotiations with other partner countries is under consideration. In this context the Summit Participants also stress the importance of concluding Framework Agreements on the Exchange of Classified Information with interested partners contributing to the CSDP Missions.
11. Concerning transport cooperation, the Vilnius Summit participants welcome achievements that seek to improve infrastructure connections between the EU and the Eastern European region. They recall the endorsement by the Eastern Partnership Transport Ministerial meeting held in Luxembourg on 9 October 2013 of the indicative map of the Eastern Partnership regional transport network that indicates connections with the trans-European Transport Network and a related list of priority projects as first concrete steps in improving transport and logistics connections. The Vilnius Summit participants welcome the initialling of a Common Aviation Area Agreement with Ukraine and the successful conclusion and implementation of such agreements with Georgia and the Republic of Moldova that have improved connections and choice for travellers. They welcome the launching of negotiations of a Common Aviation Area Agreement with Azerbaijan. They also take note of the readiness of Armenia to start negotiations on a Common Aviation Area Agreement. All these Agreements make a concrete contribution to the Eastern Partnership's goal of bringing the EU and its partners closer together.

12. The participants concerned welcome joint work towards increasing mutual energy security including through network developments and gradual integration with the EU's internal energy market and promotion of cross border trade. They will promote an inclusive and open policy on energy security, transportation and supply. They acknowledge the key developments towards the opening of the Southern Gas Corridor, including the planned modernisation of the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP), the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) and the development of other gas transport infrastructures directly linking the Caspian Region with the EU. They note Azerbaijan's strategic role in diversifying Europe's energy supplies. They look forward to continued EU support for the modernization of the Ukrainian Gas Transmission System as a key part of the European grid network, to continued efforts by Ukraine to undertake the further necessary reforms in the gas sector and to the finalization of the dialogue with the International Financial Institutions in order to disburse the first loan for the emergency gas transit project. They note the strong energy provisions of the DCFTAs, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova's work to comply with their obligations under the Energy Community, the on-going work with Ukraine on ensuring bi-directional gas flows, the development of the "Adriatic Gas Corridor" connecting Croatia, Hungary and Ukraine, the steps towards the preparation of the Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania interconnector (AGRI LNG) project, the progress in determining priority gas and electricity interconnection projects between the Republic of Moldova and the EU. They also note Georgia's application to become a member of the Energy Community. They take note of Armenia's active observership in the Energy Community. Discussions have demonstrated that there are real opportunities for Ukraine to position itself as an Eastern European gas hub after an effective long-term strategy for the use of its gas transmission and storage assets in line with Ukraine's Energy Community obligations, involving all relevant stakeholders, is developed. The Summit participants take note of the important contribution of Belarus to Europe's energy security by providing significant energy transit and they support further dialogue based on the 2009 Declaration on Cooperation of the European Commission and the Government of the Republic of Belarus in the field of energy. Dialogue has focused on energy security, regulatory issues, networks, energy efficiency and renewable energy. The Vilnius Summit participants welcome the full participation of Ukraine, including in the peer review process and the active involvement of Armenia and Belarus in the EU's nuclear stress tests. They welcome the increased cooperation in the field of nuclear safety and encourage transparency, accessibility of information and full compliance with international nuclear safety and environmental agreements.

13. Summit participants stress the importance of education, youth and culture area. They welcome the increase of academic exchanges and cooperation between the EU and Eastern European partners through Tempus and Erasmus Mundus since 2011 which has allowed more partnerships and scholarships to be funded for the benefit of an increasing number of participants. In addition, the Eastern Partnership Youth Window has substantially increased the number of young people and youth workers involved in joint projects. The Summit participants welcome the objectives outlined in the Declaration agreed at the Eastern Partnership Ministerial Conference on Culture held in Tbilisi on 27-28 June 2013 as well as the results of the Informal Eastern Partnership dialogue on education which took place in Yerevan on 13 September 2013. They also welcome the launch of the Eastern Partnership Youth Forum which took place in Kaunas on 22-25 October 2013.
14. Summit participants underline the contribution agriculture and rural development makes to partners' sustainable and inclusive development and the importance of providing to their populations safe, diversified and high quality food. They look forward to enhanced sector cooperation under the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture & Rural Development initiative (ENPARD). Summit participants also welcome the establishment of the multilateral Panel on Agriculture and Rural Development reflecting the importance of farming and rural communities in the partner countries. They also welcome large Regional Development Programmes which assist partner countries in addressing economic, social and regional imbalances. Summit participants stressed the importance of protecting Geographical Indications for promoting fair trade relations in agricultural products and foodstuffs between the EU and partners, welcoming the conclusion of such Agreements with the Republic of Moldova and Georgia and the fact that related provisions have been included in the initialled DCFTA with Ukraine.
15. Summit participants welcome the expansion of cooperation in research and innovation. Participation by researchers, research organisations and other stakeholders, including industry in the 7th Framework Programme has continued to increase, notably in theme-oriented research activities. The Summit participants further welcome the establishment of a dedicated Eastern Partnership Panel on Research and Innovation.
16. The Summit participants stress the importance of environment as one of priority areas for cooperation that is mutually beneficial for the EU and the partner countries both from an environmental and economic point of view. They welcome the progress achieved in introducing the principles of green economy, in fostering environmental governance and implementing multilateral environmental agreements. They recognise the role of various supporting programmes for boosting regional cooperation on environment and climate change also in the context of Rio+20 follow-up process, including formulation of sustainable development goals.

17. With respect to disaster risk reduction, the Summit participants welcome work carried out to establish the Electronic Regional Risk Atlas and stress the importance of bringing partner countries closer to the EU mechanisms for Emergency Response and strengthening capacity on disaster resilience, disaster prevention and management. They also welcome the signature of the Administrative Arrangement on the cooperation in the field of civil protection signed between the European Commission and the Republic of Moldova.
18. In the field of information society and media, the participants of the Vilnius Summit welcome work carried out with the view to approximate relevant partner countries' legislation and regulatory framework to the EU body of laws and regulations on electronic communication. Additionally, participants welcome work done in view to promote further electronic infrastructures for education and research in partner countries.
19. The participants of the Vilnius Summit welcome Eastern European partners increasing participation in EU programmes and cooperation with EU Agencies. Over the past two years, several partners also participated in specific components or projects under a number of EU programmes. The Republic of Moldova was associated to the EU 7th framework programme for research and technological development. They look forward to the imminent entry into force of the Protocol enabling Armenia's participation in new EU programmes. They look forward to the signature of the Protocols enabling Azerbaijan's and Georgia's participation in EU programmes. Bilateral cooperation arrangements with EU Agencies were signed including Armenia and the Republic of Moldova with the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), Georgia and the Republic of Moldova with the European Police College (CEPOL), Republic of Moldova with the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan with Frontex.
20. The participants of the Vilnius Summit welcome the regular macroeconomic dialogues, including exchange of macroeconomic information and analyses with partners with a view to enhance macroeconomic governance and contribute to economic stabilisation. Since September 2011, the EU has implemented macro-financial assistance programmes with the Republic of Moldova and Armenia in response to their economic crises. The legislative decision on macro-financial assistance to Georgia has been approved and the Memorandum of Understanding of the macro-financial assistance to Ukraine as well as the Loan Agreement have been signed.
21. The Summit's participants welcome the work and projects carried out in order to assess, monitor and implement SME policies in partner countries in line with the principles of the Small Business Act for Europe (SBA).

22. The participants of the Vilnius Summit noted the enhanced bilateral sectoral dialogues between the EU and Belarus on issues such as economic and financial cooperation, the environment and education. They encourage the further development of these sectoral dialogues.
23. The participants of the Vilnius Summit recall the valuable role of civil society within the Eastern Partnership. They recognize that civil society constitutes an integral element in a well-functioning democratic system. They underline the contribution of civil society in all the relevant activities under the Partnership including through the Civil Society Forum and its National Platforms. They welcome the support extended to civil society through the Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility. They welcome the outcome of the 5th meeting of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum on October 4-5, 2013, in Chisinau and the establishment of the permanent secretariat of the Civil Society Forum. They welcome that the 6th meeting of the Civil Society Forum will take place in Georgia. The participation of the Civil Society Forum representatives in the meetings of the multilateral Platforms should be further encouraged.
24. The participants of the Vilnius Summit also welcome the strengthened cooperation with other stakeholders including Euronest, CORLEAP and the Eastern Partnership Business Forum.
25. The participants of the Vilnius Summit welcome the efforts undertaken to enhance the Eastern Partnership visibility stressing the need to intensify implementation of the visibility strategy including with the involvement of civil society. They call for further awareness raising efforts regarding the Eastern Partnership in Eastern European Partners. They welcome the adoption of the communication and information strategy for 2014-2017 by the Government of Georgia. They welcome the increase in the number of EU information centres established in partner countries since the Warsaw Summit.
26. The Summit participants take note of the cooperation with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and third countries interested in donor coordination and more generally in the development of the Eastern Partnership, including through the informal Information and Coordination Group, without prejudice to the principles of cooperation with third states, as defined in the Prague declaration.

The next phase of the Eastern Partnership

27. The participants of the Vilnius Summit agree on a forward looking agenda for the Eastern Partnership over the next two years which will consolidate and develop the process of political association and economic integration. The Partnership will witness, for the EU and partners concerned, a challenging qualitative shift from negotiation of agreements to their effective implementation. Summit participants recognise that the implementation of these agreements with their far-reaching objectives of comprehensive political, economic and societal modernization will require significant political will to drive through the necessary reforms in order to bring about the benefits for the citizens of partner countries. The EU remains committed to supporting partners throughout this process, assessing progress through the annual progress reports presented by the Commission and the High Representative. This will also require the launching of comprehensive information and communication campaigns by partner country authorities in order to engage with the population at large, with appropriate support from the EU. The Summit participants stress the importance of pursuing differentiation in bilateral relations in combination with the further enhancement of multilateral cooperation.

28. Recalling the statements on the earliest peaceful settlement of conflicts reflected in the Prague and Warsaw Declarations, the Vilnius Summit participants welcome the EU's intention to strengthen its contribution to encourage progress in further promoting stability and multilateral confidence building. They welcome the EU's strengthened role in conflict resolution and confidence building efforts in the framework or in support of existing agreed formats and processes, including through field presence when appropriate. They emphasise the need for the earliest peaceful settlement of the conflicts on the basis of the principles and norms of international law. They welcome the recent meeting in Vienna between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan with the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group and the Presidents' agreement to advance the negotiations toward a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The participants support the activities of the EUSR for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia. They stress the need of the full implementation of the 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement and the importance of the presence of the EUMM in Georgia. Participants emphasize the need of the full implementation of the mandate of the EUMM and reiterate their support for the Geneva International Discussions. The participants stress the importance of progress in resolving the Transnistrian conflict and look forward to the advancement of the negotiations in the 5+2 format on all three baskets of the agreed agenda, in particular institutional, political and security issues. They also commend the valued continuous contribution of the EUBAM on the border between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

29. The Summit participants note that the EU remains engaged in a European Dialogue on Modernisation with Belarusian society and that exchanges are ongoing between the EU and the Belarusian government with a view to determining the best future form of cooperation on modernisation issues.

Association Agreements and DCFTAs

30. Summit participants stress the importance of pursuing as expeditiously as possible the steps leading to the signature, provisional application and ratification of the Association Agreements, including DCFTAs, between the EU and the partner countries concerned. They underline that the implementation of the Association Agreements/DCFTAs will signify a fundamental shift towards deeper political association and economic integration of partners with the EU. In this context, the successful implementation of the Agreements and the gradual economic integration of partner countries' economies in the EU internal market will strengthen the ability of partner countries to compete effectively in international markets, will bring direct benefits for consumers, as well as domestic and foreign investors and entrepreneurs, due to the modernization of public services and the approximation to EU norms and standards on competition policy, intellectual property, food safety, consumer protection, customs, public procurement, services and road safety among others. They underline that real progress on DCFTAs can only be achieved with economies that welcome competition, have well-functioning institutions and a legal framework that guarantees a safe business-and investment climate.
31. In 2014-15, for the partner countries concerned, cooperation and dialogue will be structured around the implementation of Association Agreement/DCFTA provisions, focused in particular on approximation to EU norms and standards. It is expected that the EU and Eastern European partners together will engage and carry out a number of preparatory actions, including strengthening of partner countries' institutions, to pave the way for meeting the challenge of complying with schedules of specific measures foreseen in the annexes of the Association Agreements/DCFTAs.

Sector cooperation

32. The Eastern Partnership mobility agenda will be an important priority for the 2014-15 period. The Summit participants look forward to progress towards visa free regimes for individual partner countries in due course on a case by case basis and provided that conditions for well-managed and secure mobility are in place. In the meantime, they encourage the full implementation of the provisions of the Visa Facilitation Agreements and encourage Member States to use the flexibilities offered by the Visa Code.

33. The participants of the Vilnius Summit express their commitment to strengthening further the bilateral and multilateral cooperation and coordination with interested Eastern European partners in areas related to freedom, security and justice. In line with the EU Global Approach to Migration and Mobility, dialogue and cooperation will include the promotion of secure and well managed migration and mobility, the prevention of and the fight against illegal migration and trafficking in human beings, the strengthening of international protection and the enhancement of the development impact of migration. The participants of Vilnius Summit express the importance of enhancing collaboration in the area of prevention and fight against organised and transnational crime, drugs, corruption and cybercrime as well as law enforcement cooperation. Convening further meetings at ministerial level will help to ensure appropriate political guidance and coordination. The Eastern Partnership Panel on Migration and Asylum will continue contributing to enhancing dialogue and cooperation on the broader mobility agenda. The Panel on Fight against Corruption will contribute to developing and implementing tools and measures aimed at preventing and fighting corruption. The participants of the Vilnius Summit encourage further intensification of the cooperation between the Eastern European Partners and the EU agencies relevant for the justice and home affairs area.
34. In the transport sector, the Summit participants look forward to the implementation of concrete actions that make transport between the EU and partner countries safer, more efficient and sustainable and have a positive impact on trade flows. The participants of the Vilnius Summit stress the importance of a swift signature and entry into force of the Common Aviation Area Agreement with Ukraine, look forward to the next steps in the aviation negotiations with Azerbaijan and look forward to the start of similar negotiations with Armenia. The Summit participants look forward to the future inclusion of inland waterways into the Eastern Partnership regional transport network. They stress the importance of timely ratification of the Common Aviation Area Agreements between the EU and Georgia and Republic of Moldova. Next steps in transport cooperation will focus on regulatory convergence in all transport modes and implementation of priority projects with the help of European and International Financial Institutions.

35. The participants of the Vilnius Summit, recalling their energy interdependence and common interest to strengthen mutual energy security including within the Eastern Partnership, confirm their intention to deepen further bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Market integration will be further promoted through the completion of the EU's internal market, including interconnections, and, where appropriate, the implementation of the DCFTAs and the Energy Community Treaty as well as other relevant legal instruments such as Energy Charter Treaty. Participants agree to cooperate on the further development of energy infrastructure of joint interest including through enhanced EU support, within existing instruments, for the construction and upgrading of interconnections between partners and the EU energy market. Participants note the key importance to consistently increase efforts on energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources also through capacity building in the field of green energy technology. They support the closest possible involvement in the Covenant of Mayors and welcome the decision to expand the Eastern Europe Energy Efficiency and Environment Partnership (E5P) to cover Armenia, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, in addition to Ukraine. Participants welcome prospects for enhanced nuclear safety cooperation. They look forward to the implementation of the nuclear stress tests including the recommendations resulting from them.
36. The participants of the Vilnius Summit express their commitment to strengthen further the cooperation in the area of customs including through Integrated border management. Cooperation will focus on developing safe and fluid trade lanes, promoting risk management, the fight against fraud and investing in customs modernisation in the region
37. The participants of the Vilnius Summit highlight the importance of people to people contacts for the achievement of the Partnership's objectives. In the fields of higher education and youth, EU support will aim at increasing the participation of Higher Education Institutions and students from partner countries in the new "Erasmus+" programme. Support to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions will continue and where possible should be increased. Cooperation on youth issues including under Erasmus+ will allow for enhanced youth employability and young people's active participation in democratic life. Summit participants also highlight the opportunities for cooperation in the field of culture opened by the Creative Europe Programme. The policy dialogue on the modernisation of cultural policies in Eastern European partners will be continued. The policy dialogues on health will also be continued, with a particular focus on both communicable and non-communicable diseases and health security.

38. To enhance agriculture and rural development cooperation, Summit participants welcome the Republic of Moldova's intention to host in January 2014 an Eastern Partnership Conference of Agriculture Ministers aimed at promoting approximation to the EU Acquis as appropriate, supporting agricultural and rural sector reforms in Eastern European countries and further developing cooperation with the EU in this area in particular through the ENPARD approach. They stress the importance of civil society involvement and the ownership by partners among the ENPARD implementation principles. The participants of the Vilnius Summit stress the importance of cooperation in food safety, animal and plant health and to continue technical and financial support in these areas through the available instruments.
39. The participants of the Vilnius Summit recall the importance of research and innovation as key drivers for socio-economic growth and stress the need for reinforced cooperation in those domains to achieve a Common Knowledge and Innovation Space. They notably highlight the need for supporting the reinforcement of Eastern European partner countries' capacities in research and innovation as well as increased cooperation in the forthcoming EU "Horizon 2020" programme.
40. The participants of the Vilnius Summit stress the strategic importance and necessity of closer cooperation in the areas of environment and climate change as priorities for action. They highlight the need to pursue the process of regulatory approximation and policy convergence in these fields with particular attention to be paid to the green economy, biodiversity, a shared environmental information system and environmental assessments, the integration of environmental concerns into other sectors and the significant role of civil society. They call for full and effective implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and for continuing efforts to greening economies including those contained in Rio+20 "The Future We Want" Declaration. They underline the importance for Eastern Partnership societies and economies to engage in measures and cooperation to step up their actions to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to climate change. In this context they strongly confirmed their engagement in developing the global agreement on climate change to be adopted in 2015 in Paris for it to come into effect and be implemented from 2020. They stress the need to continue EU assistance, in particular in view of establishing a fully operational Shared Environmental Information System and for enabling ambitious further action, both in the period up to 2020 and in the longer term as well as to foster regional environmental initiatives.

41. With regard to information society and media policy development, which is a tool for the promotion of universal and European values, political stability, economic growth and social justice the participants of the Vilnius Summit welcome and further encourage the continuation of capacity building with EU support in the area of electronic communications regulation, promotion of related policies such as eSignature, eHealth and Media aiming at creating a common room for interoperable cross-border services. They also look forward to partners' participation in the relevant part of the "Horizon 2020" programme and their enhanced involvement in electronic infrastructures for education and research.
42. Summit participants stress the importance to further develop the Eastern European partners' participation in EU programmes and their cooperation with EU Agencies.

Strengthen multilateral cooperation

43. The participants of the Vilnius Summit acknowledge the significance of multilateral cooperation in support of deeper bilateral relations. As the bilateral dimension gradually moves from a phase of negotiation to one of implementation, it will be important to strengthen the linkage between the bilateral and multilateral dimensions so as to ensure that the multilateral dimension continues to effectively support partners in their approximation efforts. The work of the multilateral dimension should effectively feed into bilateral cooperation and encourage synergies. At the same time, the fora of the multilateral dimension are the place where exchanges between the EU and all six partners can be held and therefore their agendas should remain inclusive and encourage the active participation of all. The new Work Programmes of the multilateral Platforms recently adopted should be implemented with these considerations in mind. Welcoming the sector Ministerial meetings in the fields of JHA and Transport, they encourage the continuation of meetings at Ministerial level in these and other areas as appropriate, on a regular basis. Building on the already existing informal Partnership dialogues, the participants of the Vilnius Summit decided to launch a structural dialogue in foreign policy, including as appropriate by strengthening regular meetings both at Ministerial and Senior Officials' level. They welcome and look forward to complementary and reinforcing national programmes, such as, inter alia, the Estonian Centre of Eastern Partnership focused on administrative capacity as well as the Eastern Partnership Academy of Public Administration in Warsaw.

44. Recalling the importance of cooperation in the CSDP area, the participants of the Vilnius Summit look forward to the further strengthening of multilateral and bilateral security dialogue and practical CSDP cooperation between the EU and interested partner countries, notably through the work to be carried out by the CSDP Panel. They underline the role to be played by such a forum in support of the developing cooperation with the interested partner countries in the areas covered by the Framework Participation Agreements. They welcome the contribution by Ukraine of a frigate to the EU-led operation EUNAVFOR Atalanta as of January 2014 as well as the readiness of Georgia and Republic of Moldova to contribute to EU-led operations to which they have been recently invited. They also appreciate Ukraine's commitment to contribute to EU Battlegroups in 2014 and 2016.
45. They also highlight the importance of the Eastern Partnership multilateral dimension in strengthening cooperation between partners as well as with the EU, including through territorial cooperation especially cross-border cooperation.
46. The participants of the Vilnius Summit invite the European Commission to continue promoting and strengthening visible and effective Flagship initiatives adding value to existing cooperation, with an enhanced participation of EU Member States and partner countries. They will contribute to demonstrating to citizens the tangible benefits brought about by the Partnership through practical projects.
47. In order to improve the business environment in the partner countries, further assistance to support the assessment and implementation of sustainable and effective SME policies will be undertaken within the framework of the multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership.
48. Acknowledging the significance of Eastern Partnership multilateral cooperation, the Summit participants stress the importance of ensuring coherence between various relevant regional initiatives and networks. They recall that the Eastern Partnership could help develop closer ties among the partner countries themselves.
49. The participants emphasized the importance of developing regional cooperation through the involvement of partners as appropriate in implementing EU macro-regional strategies. They also encourage the development of efficient inter-regional and cross border cooperation dialogue, including EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation), to facilitate partners' social and economic development.

50. The participants of the Summit highlight the significant role of local democracy and citizen participation in pursuing the goals of the Eastern Partnership. The principles of local democracy represent a universal European value corroborated by the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Local governments are important providers of public services. The participants support the inclusion of local and regional authorities in the implementation of the relevant Eastern Partnership policies and strategies and encourage the representatives of national associations of local and regional authorities and CORLEAP to enhance their contribution to the Eastern Partnership. The role of local and regional authorities could be also strengthened through targeted support, including through capacity building.

Financial support

51. Summit participants note that the new European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) the successor instrument to the 2007-2013 European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, will be the main instrument for EU financial assistance to EU neighbourhood partner countries over the period 2014-2020. They note that partner countries will continue to receive financial support in line with the incentive based approach introduced within the European Neighbourhood Policy by the 2011 review. Assistance will be focused on a few sectors of concentration, with the aim of increasing ownership, quality and results as a means to contribute towards the modernisation and social cohesion of societies. Support to the implementation of the Association Agreements/DCFTAs, effective regulatory approximation and administrative capacity building will be at the core of EU support under ENI. They agree that future EU assistance should take into account the provisional application of the Association Agreements including Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas and encourage the necessary consultations to this end. Two specific initiatives for multi-country support: the Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF) and Cross- Border Cooperation (CBC) will continue extending financial support in specific priority areas. They look forward, under the ENI, to building upon the results of the recently launched Eastern Partnership Territorial Cooperation Programme. Underlining the importance of an enhanced coordination and coherence of support of all donors providing funding to the Eastern European partners, the participants of the Vilnius Summit call for the Eastern Partnership reform agenda to be considered as a key reference for the overall EU support.

52. The participants of the Vilnius Summit welcome the important contribution already made and to be further extended by EIB and EBRD in supporting the partner countries in their reform efforts. They welcome EIB's intention to develop its activity based on its future external lending mandate in the framework of the Eastern Partnership financing projects that help connect the EU with the eastern neighborhood, boost development and address challenges in the region's energy, environment and transport sectors. In order to promote economic development, innovation and job creation, the participants of the Vilnius Summit look forward to work by the EIB exploring possible options to further support risk capital operations in Eastern European partner countries in cooperation with other European Financing Institutions active in this field in the region. They welcome EBRD's intention to continue its support to the private sector development, in particular by reinforcing the financial sector and facilitating access of SMEs to finance denominated in local currency, and the support to sustainable energy and to the public infrastructure.
53. The macro-financial assistance programmes in Ukraine and Georgia are foreseen to progress in 2014-2015 when the preconditions are met and when the programmes are linked to a meaningful reform agenda. The EU macro-financial assistance instrument may also be mobilised in the future to assist partner countries to address short-term balance-of-payments difficulties when the preconditions are met and when the programmes are linked to a meaningful reform agenda. Continued dialogue and exchange of analysis and advice within the Eastern Partnership could lead to further implementation of structural reforms, fiscal consolidation and thus a strengthening of economic activity.

Stakeholder involvement

54. The participants of the Vilnius Summit underline the need to further strengthen civil society. Summit participants also recognise the important role played by civil society, through the Civil Society Forum and its national platforms, in partners' reform processes in encouraging dialogue between civil society and partner countries' authorities on achieving the goals of the Eastern Partnership. They emphasize the importance of continuing to make available adequate resources as appropriate to support the capacity development and further involvement of civil society in national reform processes.
55. Summit participants welcome the steps made by the Conference of local and regional authorities of the Eastern Partnership to develop cooperation at the levels of government closest to the citizen and take note of the results of its annual meeting held in Vilnius on 4-5 September 2013. The Summit also encourages enhanced inter-parliamentary cooperation within the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly 2014-15.

56. Welcoming the outcome of the Business Forum held in Vilnius on 28 November 2013, the participants of the Vilnius Summit invite the business communities in EU and partner countries to further develop the Business Forum and to use this platform to exploit the new economic opportunities offered. They also encourage the social partners (employers' organizations and trade unions), including through the Civil Society Forum where appropriate, to work more closely together as a means to advance in 2014-15 in the area of economic convergence and regulatory approximation. They underline the need to promote investment, research-industry partnerships as well as a vibrant and innovative SME sector to contribute to broad-based, inclusive growth and job creation. They stress the role to be played by SMEs in economic development in partner countries and the need to develop and implement business-friendly policies to facilitate investment. They recognize the contribution of a well-functioning social dialogue to support socio-economic reforms and inclusive growth. They indicate their intention of enhancing cooperation in the field of employment and social policy, notably by involving social partners.

57. They invite EU institutions, EU Member States, Eastern European partners and other stakeholders to contribute to the Eastern Partnership visibility Strategy implementation by further informing society in partner countries and the EU of benefits derived from the Partnership, the implementation of the Agreements concluded in the framework of the Partnership for citizens, businesses and the society as a whole.

58. Summit participants look forward to their next Summit in Riga in the first half of 2015 where they intend to review the implementation of this Declaration and of Agreements concluded and chart the way ahead in the Partnership.
