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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Salzburg Forum Ministerial Conference (23–24 June 2021, Prague, Czech Republic)

Delegations will find attached:

- joint declaration **of the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum**

and

- a declaration on **political guidelines for the joint coordination platform on effectively combating irregular migration along the Eastern Mediterranean route** adopted of the Salzburg Forum Ministerial Conference, which was held on 23-24 June 2021 in Prague, Czech Republic.



**SALZBURG FORUM ANNIVERSARY MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
23 – 24 June 2021, Prague**

**JOINT DECLARATION
of the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum**

The Ministers of the Interior and representatives of the Salzburg Forum Member States met on the occasion of the Salzburg Forum Anniversary Ministerial Conference held under the Czech Presidency on 23 – 24 June in Prague.

The conference also gathered representatives of the Portuguese EU Council Presidency, the European Commission, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), Europol, the European Asylum Support Office as well as representatives of the Secretariat of the Joint Coordination Platform, the Ministers and representatives of the Western Balkans, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Switzerland, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Moreover, the representative from Kosovo took part as a special guest¹.

Commemorating the 20th anniversary of the signature of the first Salzburg Forum Joint Declaration in 2001, the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum evaluated their cooperation so far in terms of the goals anchored in the Salzburg Forum Vision 2020 as well as discussed the future direction of the Salzburg Forum.

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



Reiterating the importance of the Salzburg Forum as the largest regional cooperation platform in the area of Home Affairs within the European Union, the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum adopted the Salzburg Forum Agenda 2030 as a new multi-annual strategic document setting goals for their cooperation in the next ten years.

Considering the cooperation within the EU as one of the central functions of the Salzburg Forum, the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum stressed the necessity to focus future efforts on maximising the potential of the Salzburg Forum in terms of coordinating positions on issues of common interest and their lobbying at the EU level.

Reaffirming the regional cooperation of the Salzburg Forum as a key tool for the fight against cross-border crime and ensuring safety in the region, the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum expressed their commitment to further promote the Salzburg Forum as "Model Region Central and Southeast Europe" with regard to strategic and operational cooperation within the EU as well as with third countries.

Bearing in mind the ever-growing relevance of the external dimension of internal security and migration, the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum are ready to pay due attention to the relations of the Salzburg Forum with respective third countries and regions in the future. In particular, given the geographic proximity, developing closer cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries as a whole will be considered in order to bring these countries closer to EU standards as well as to actively contribute to building a mutual security partnership.

The Ministers of the Salzburg Forum also confirmed their long-term goal of bringing the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova closer to EU standards in the area of freedom, security and justice as well as promoting security in the region as their top priority.

The Ministers of the Salzburg Forum also reiterated their continuous commitment to prevent and combat transit irregular migration and contribute to security and stability along the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes, mainly through improved overall cooperation,



protection of external borders and strengthened cooperation and capacity building in different fields, including returns, as well as using proactive complementary communication measures to promote these initiatives. To this end, they stressed their strong support to further operationalisation of the Joint Coordination Platform in close cooperation between the Salzburg Forum countries and all relevant partners.

The implementation of the Salzburg Forum Agenda 2030 will be launched during the incoming Hungarian Salzburg Forum Presidency. The Ministers are ready to provide their full support in this regard.

Being aware of the necessity to receive a useful feedback as well as recommendations for the best possible implementation, the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum commit themselves to carry out a mid-term review of the Salzburg Forum Agenda 2030 in 2026.

In this context, the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum also endorsed the outcomes of the on-line meeting of the Salzburg Forum Police Chiefs (13 May 2021) who had strongly supported the content of the draft Salzburg Forum Agenda 2030 as well as agreed on the necessity to strengthen police cooperation within the EU by sharing best practices gained during the COVID-19 pandemic, to further promote development of the Joint Coordination Platform and to focus on developing closer cooperation between police and customs in relation to Europol where possible.

Taking into account the enormous impact of the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis on the lives of EU citizens as well as on the functioning of the European Union, the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum exchanged their experiences from the pandemic in the context of Schengen cooperation. In the light of the strategy on the future of Schengen recently presented by the European Commission, they welcomed the need to reform Schengen to address current needs and existing deficits in the security and other areas. To this end, they reiterated the necessity to restore the full functioning of Schengen while maintaining a sufficient level of flexibility as



regards temporary reintroduction of border controls in case of future crises, assuming that this measure should be used as a last resort.

The Ministers of the Salzburg Forum also stressed their commitment to further strengthening police cooperation within the EU with a special focus on improved cooperation in the Schengen area as well as reiterated their support to Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia towards their full Schengen membership.

Following the presentation of the incoming Slovenian EU Council Presidency, the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum welcomed priorities set out in the area of Home Affairs and expressed their readiness to support Slovenia during its Presidency term.

Finally, following the Vienna Declaration on effectively combating irregular migration along the Eastern Mediterranean Route (July 2020), the Ministers of the Salzburg Forum, together with the Ministers and representatives of the Western Balkans, Denmark, Germany, Greece and Switzerland discussed migration challenges along the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes.

Confirming the key role and the mandate of the recently established Joint Coordination Platform in the prevention and fight against irregular migration along the aforementioned migration routes, the respective Ministers jointly adopted the declaration setting political guidelines for further work of the Joint Coordination Platform.

The Ministers reaffirmed their preparedness for any situation requiring cooperation as well as their commitment to supporting each other in a pro-active and coordinated manner. To this end, they are committed to making best possible use of the Joint Coordination Platform in their joint efforts towards combating irregular migration.

Prague, 24 June 2021



**Salzburg Forum Ministerial Conference
23 - 24 June 2021, Prague, Czech Republic**

**PRAGUE DECLARATION
ON POLITICAL GUIDELINES FOR
THE JOINT COORDINATION PLATFORM
on effectively combating irregular migration
along the Eastern Mediterranean route**

We, the Ministers and representatives of the Western Balkans, the Salzburg Forum, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Switzerland in the presence of the European Commission, EASO, Frontex, Europol, ICMPD, IOM, UNHCR and the representatives of the Secretariat of the Joint Coordination Platform (JCP) have met in Prague to further enhance cooperation and solidarity with a view of preventing irregular migration, as agreed in the “Vienna Declaration” of 23 July 2020.

Given the volatile migration and security situation and the ongoing migratory pressure along the Eastern Mediterranean and the Western Balkan routes, we reaffirm our preparedness for any situation requiring cooperation and solidarity and are committed to supporting each other in a pro-active and coordinated manner.

To this end, and as tasked by the Ministers in the “Vienna Declaration”, experts from interested partners have prepared a concept for an “Operational Platform – Eastern Mediterranean Route / Joint Coordination Platform (JCP)”. In addition, operational work towards implementing the Vienna Declaration has been successfully advanced.

Building on previous discussions and experience gained so far, we are committed to making best possible use of the JCP in our joint efforts towards combating irregular migration. We agree on the following political guidelines for future work to be undertaken by the JCP and its Vienna-based Secretariat:



The Joint Coordination Platform

- promotes better coordination of measures against irregular migration along the Eastern Mediterranean / Western Balkans route, while fully respecting fundamental rights,
- focuses on four areas that play a key role in countering irregular migration by effectively protecting our borders¹, return and asylum, and combating migrant smuggling as well as trafficking in human beings and striving to generate operational added value in these areas,
- is a service provider for those who report a need and those who wish to support (with these roles being interchangeable), and provides support whenever and wherever support is requested,
- facilitates rapid matching of needs and provision of relevant support along the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans routes,
- carries out through its Secretariat a structured gap-analysis to provide the JCP partners with regular needs assessment (such as roadmaps including timelines), in order to facilitate the preparation of tailor-made actions according to needs and offers of support if requested,
- contributes to a comprehensive, user-friendly overview of migratory challenges and relevant security policy developments along the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes, including a situational overview and a comprehensive risk analysis,
- contributes to using and strengthening regional cooperation formats (such as the Salzburg Forum, Brdo Process, PCC SEE, IISG, SELEC),
- fully respects and complements the EU agencies' mandates and contributes towards their fulfillment (for instance by facilitating bundled contributions from partners) as well as ensures complementary approaches with international organizations, such as UNHCR, IOM and ICMPD operating along the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes,
- avoids duplication of efforts through coordination and optimal use of resources,

¹ For Serbia, this means border/boundary management.



- contributes to further implementing both the Whole-of-Route approach and the comprehensive approach to migration *“which combines more effective control of the EU’s external borders, increased external action and the internal aspects, in line with our principles and values”*, as defined in the European Council Conclusions of 28 June 2018,
- has a lean structure that could be gradually further developed.

We are committed to making best possible, coordinated use of all existing instruments with a view to aligning strategic priorities, needs and actions along the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes – always seeking to supplement efforts while avoiding duplication. We will continue to work towards further promoting the JCP as a tool for strengthening security and stability in the Western Balkans as well as bringing them closer to EU standards of the area of freedom, security and justice.

In this context, we will build on agreements, such as the “Council conclusions on enhancing cooperation with Western Balkans partners in the field of migration and security” of 5 June 2020.

We entrust the interested partners’ experts with drawing up a concept for further developing the structure of the JCP, which became operational on 1 January 2021.

We will continue to review progress on the above in the JCP Ministerial Committees, scheduled to take place once a year. In this context, it is also intended to evaluate the work of the platform and its Secretariat, with the evaluations to be launched one year after this conference and then to be carried out regularly on an annual basis.

Prague, 24 June 2021