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NOTE

From:	Czech delegation
To:	Council
Subject:	Salzburg Forum Ministerial Conference, Prague (Czech Republic), 3-4 November 2016

Delegations will find attached the joint declaration adopted of the Salzburg Forum Ministerial Conference, which was held on 3 and 4 November 2016 in Prague (Czech Republic).



SALZBURG FORUM MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Prague, Czech Republic

3 – 4 November 2016

JOINT DECLARATION

The Ministers of Interior of the Salzburg Forum Member States met on 3 and 4 November 2016 upon the invitation of the Czech Presidency of the Salzburg Forum.

The Conference was also attended by the respective Ministers belonging to the Group of Friends from the Western Balkans and Moldova, as well as by representatives of the European Commission, EASO, Europol and European Border and Coast Guard Agency - Frontex.

Special guests of the conference were ministerial delegations from the Republic of Malta as the upcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union and Kosovo.¹

The main objective of the conference was to exchange views on key issues on the agenda in the field of migration, internal security and police cooperation and to identify common positions in the respective strategic topics and also to assess ongoing regional cooperation and plan the next steps.

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

The Ministers agreed on the following with regard to the main topics for discussion:

Migration – exchange of views and most recent development

The Ministers discussed the current situation along the Western Balkans Route and exchanged views on the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement. They welcomed the progress made in regards to stemming the flow of irregular migrants to the European Union, however, also identified several bottlenecks putting the whole system at risk. To this end, they agreed that finding common sustainable solutions which are able to strengthen the migration management and the control of the EU external border and reinforce the resilience of the European Union, as well as the full implementation of the EU-Turkey statement, have to remain the priority goals. The Ministers recognised the efforts of the Salzburg Forum Member States with EU external border and the support provided to them by the other Salzburg Forum Member States. Moreover, following the Bratislava Roadmap of 16 September 2016 and the European Council Conclusions of 20 – 21 October 2016, they underlined that immediate assistance to the most affected states is essential and confirmed their commitments to continuing support for the countries of the Western Balkans and relevant EU Member States. An unprecedented and uncontrolled migratory flow along the Eastern Mediterranean-Western Balkans route, which Europe has faced over the last two years, must not be repeated in the future.

Information sharing as a crucial part of the counter-terrorism policy

The Ministers reiterated the importance of an effective counter-terrorism policy. They stressed that to ensure an effective response to terrorism and current security threats it is essential to share relevant information at the right time and to support all relevant actors to do so, including through the implementation of the smart borders package in all Member States. The Ministers consider the structure of the existing information exchange in this area as a good basis for cooperation. However, they emphasized the need to improve the process and quality of feeding the databases and to maintain or establish, where necessary by common legal framework, the access of law enforcement authorities to new data, in particular in connection with crossing the external border.

Enhanced cooperation in the cross border search for missing children

The Ministers agreed that cases of missing children are of a sensitive nature and urgent. The quick and effective cross-border information exchange between national law enforcement authorities and other expert bodies is therefore crucial. The Ministers welcomed initiatives to make the protection of missing children a priority and stressed the importance of closer cooperation with the EU agencies, law enforcement authorities and other expert bodies. Hence, they welcomed the expert meeting on this issue planned for the first half of 2017 in the Czech Republic.

Reduction of methamphetamine production by regulating availability of drug precursors

The Ministers agreed that a reduction of methamphetamine production by regulating availability of drug precursors is needed and that monitoring of illicit trafficking and domestic trade with red phosphorus and other chemicals which may be abused for drug production is also important. The Salzburg Forum Member States will support measures regulating the sale of medicines containing pseudoephedrine and the trade with red phosphorus at the EU level.

Upcoming Hungarian Salzburg Forum Presidency

The Ministers welcomed the information on the programme and priorities of the upcoming Hungarian Presidency of the Salzburg Forum and expressed their commitment to continue the close cooperation.

Overview of the Czech Presidency of the Salzburg Forum

The Ministers took note of the meetings held during the Czech Presidency of the Salzburg Forum: the Conference on Police Ethics and Integrity (28 – 30 September 2016, Prague) and the Witness Protection Working Group (10 – 12 October 2016, Prague). They expressed their approval of the Common Conclusions from the Meeting of the Salzburg Forum Police Chiefs (12 – 13 October 2016, Mikulov), where the enhanced information exchange with regard to fight against terrorism and fight against illegal migration were discussed, as well as the role of INTERPOL in both of these areas.

Prague, 4 November 2016
