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NOTE

From:	Norwegian delegation
To:	Council
Subject:	Ministerial Forum for Member States of the Schengen Area with External Land Borders – Joint Statement

Delegations will find attached a Joint Statement agreed upon by the participating Member States in the Ministerial Forum for Member States of the Schengen Area with external land borders. The meeting of this Forum took place on 20-22 May 2019 in Kirkenes, Norway, and its results will be presented to the JHA Council on 7 June 2019.

Joint Statement

We, the Ministers in charge of border management of Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, cooperating within the framework of the Ministerial Forum for Member States of the Schengen Area with External Land Borders (the Forum), established in Lappeenranta, Finland, in 2013;

gathered in Kirkenes, Norway, on 20-22 May 2019, upon the invitation of the Norwegian Presidency of the Forum.

The Forum

reminding that challenges related to illegal immigration and threats to internal security still persist and that an effective border management is the key to address these challenges;

noting that during recent years, important steps have been taken in order to further develop capacities for border management that will not only meet current and future challenges at the external borders, but also enable and support the Member States to handle extraordinary situations that might occur at the external borders;

welcoming the further strengthening of the capacities of the European Border and Coast Guard, with increased coordination of return activities and cooperation with Third Countries of migration origin or transit, bearing in mind that the management of the external borders is the primary responsibility of the Member States;

recognizing the measures taken by the EU to support Member States in their efforts to strengthen the control of the external borders, including introduction and further development of IT-systems that support the effectiveness of checks at the external borders which will be significant tools to enhance the management of the external borders, such as EES, ETIAS, SIS, VIS and Interoperability;

acknowledging the commitment of the EU, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and the Member States to further develop the European Integrated Border Management, in particular national integrated border management strategies reflecting the diversity of the challenges at the external borders;

recalling the importance of effective implementation of the European Integrated Border Management concept and the need to develop common standards for external border surveillance, as elaborated in the Forums joint statement last year and further reflected by the European Council;

underlining that the introduction of new measures to improve the management of the external borders, such as the EES and ETIAS, represent challenges to resources, infrastructure and technical equipment of Member States with external land borders that must be properly addressed;

emphasising that the specific situations, needs and interests of the Member States responsible for the management of the external land borders, are given the vital importance they deserve;

CONCLUDED THAT

1. Further strengthened cooperation among national authorities carrying out tasks related to freedom, security and justice, and between the relevant EU Agencies, is of decisive importance. This will enhance returns, prevention of illegal immigration and cross border crime, improve third country cooperation and will further develop a comprehensive and cost-efficient European Integrated Border Management.
2. New and further developed solutions and systems for the effective border management and internal security, in particular the implementation of the EES at the external land borders require special attention, close cooperation and support from the European Commission and the EU Agencies in order to ensure the effective and timely implementation and balance between the security and fluency of the traffic.
3. Implementation of the new European Border and Coast Guard regulation will put a heavy burden on the Member States and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), and therefore, it is essential to set realistic priorities and coordinated timelines that shall ensure effective implementation with high level of professionalism.

4. Building increased capacities of the European Border and Coast Guard must be carried out in a manner that does not jeopardize the Member States capabilities to fulfil their primary responsibilities, while it will require close cooperation between the European Commission, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and the Member States, in order to strike the right balance between capacities that must be present at national level and capacities developed under the coordination of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex).
5. Development of capacities must take due consideration to the actual operational needs and thorough analysis of risks at the external borders of what the Schengen area might encounter in the future, whereas the scope of the review of the European Border and Coast Guard standing corps and the evaluation of the regulation must be elaborated in close cooperation with the Member States.
6. Development of common standards for external border surveillance, in particular those to be applied at the external land borders, should be done in close cooperation between the Member States, the European Commission and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), in order to support the implementation of the upcoming multiannual strategic policy cycle for the European Integrated Border Management in an effective and cost-efficient way.
7. The negotiations on the Integrated Border Management Fund and other relevant funds must take due consideration to the needs and specificities of the Member States responsible for the management of the external land borders in their efforts to manage migration flows, returns and border management and prevent cross-border crime.
8. The Ministerial meeting of the Forum in 2020 will take place in Romania.