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## **SALZBURG FORUM MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE**

**16 November 2017**

**Warsaw, Republic of Poland**

### **JOINT DECLARATION**

The Ministers of the Interior of the Salzburg Forum Member States met on 15-16 November 2017 in Warsaw, for the Salzburg Forum Ministerial Conference under the Polish Presidency in the Salzburg Forum.

The Conference also gathered respective Ministers of the Interior from the states belonging to the Group of Friends from the Western Balkans and Moldova, as well as representatives of the European Commission, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol). The main challenges discussed were as follows:

#### **Internal security of the European Union**

The Ministers discussed the current challenges for the internal security of the European Union drawing from the processes of strategic evaluation and planning of the EU's policy in the area of Justice and Home Affairs that are undertaken at the level of the European Council, JHA Council and the European Commission. The Ministers declared their willingness to respond jointly to the changing picture of threats and the growing need for international cooperation, especially as regards fight against terrorism and cybercrime.

The Ministers underlined that the internal security policy of the EU has to respond to the challenges of interconnected and cross-cutting security threats by looking for synergies and coherence among different policy areas. Implementation of the principle of interoperability was identified as a good



example in this regard. The Ministers acknowledged also the growing role of the private sector in the security architecture, underlying the need to further develop the public-private partnership.

Moreover, the Ministers emphasized the need to fully implement the existing security instruments at the EU level, as well as to further develop them, especially as regards the information exchange and operational cooperation. The need for a more proactive response to security challenges was acknowledged. In this context, the Ministers reflected on the importance of making full use of the PNR Directive, also as regards the international information exchange.

Poland shared its experience concerning the newly introduced system of pre-paid cards' registration. The Ministers agreed that such solution may be further considered as regards its effectiveness for the law enforcement agencies and that experiences should be further shared between Salzburg Forum Member States.

The Ministers agreed that it is crucial to find the right balance between security requirements and fundamental rights. It was underlined that the Member States are primarily responsible for guaranteeing security of their citizens and that fulfilling this role requires appropriate security instruments in place.

The Ministers reflected also on the retention of telecommunications data for security purposes emphasizing its important role in the prevention and fight against crime and terrorism. The Ministers agreed on the importance of finding appropriate solutions at the EU level to ensure the possibility to use data retention schemes in a way that respects the case-law of the Court of Justice of the European Union and adequately responds to the operational needs of the law enforcement authorities. The Ministers agreed that the effectiveness of the data retention depends to a large extent on the availability of historic data.



Therefore, an adequate data retention period has to be guaranteed for the proper functioning of the law enforcement services.

## **Border security, migration, asylum**

The Ministers took note of the current decrease of migration pressure on the Mediterranean after a surge of irregular migrants arriving to Italy from Libya in May and June and the overall improvement of the migratory situation in Europe. The temporary increase of irregular migrants on the Central Mediterranean route did not have a direct impact on the currently stable situation in the Western Balkans but will be closely monitored. The Ministers discussed the recent shifts of migration flows, acknowledging the increase in smugglers activity and the number of irregular migrants on some routes, particularly the Western Mediterranean Route. The drop in the total number of irregular migrants can be attributed to ongoing cooperation and preparedness of countries in Central and South East Europe along the Western Balkan Route, the ongoing implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement as well as the swift reaction of Italy with the support of the EU and Member States to the situation on the Mediterranean especially decisive action aimed at stemming the number of departures from Libya. The Ministers have concluded that the results were achieved mainly with actions taken to strengthen the external border security and through cooperation with Libya and other states along the routes. Taking this into account, the Ministers have agreed that an effective solution to the current problem of irregular migration should be based on a range of actions aimed at further improving the security of external borders, combating migrant smuggling, improving effectiveness of returns and addressing the root causes of migration in cooperation with key third countries.

On border security the Ministers welcomed the ongoing strengthening of the role played by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency in supporting the Member States at the borders through joint operations, e.g. in the area of returns. The Ministers noted progress in the implementation of the crucial



large-scale IT systems improving border security and reaffirmed their support for the swift full implementation of the Entry-Exit System and European Travel Information and Authorization System. Acknowledging that the Schengen area is still under pressure by migration on various routes as well as secondary movements and terrorist threats, the Ministers stressed that the freedom of movement within the Schengen area should be protected and the reintroduction of internal border controls should be undertaken as an exceptional measure. The focus should be given to areas in which our actions are most effective, in particular further strengthening the security of the EU external borders and stemming migration through cooperation with key partners along the main routes.

The Ministers took note of the Austrian proposal to establish a joint illegal migration database and agreed to elaborate further on this idea on expert level.

## **Overview of the Polish Presidency of the Salzburg Forum**

The Ministers took note of the meetings held during the Polish Presidency of the Salzburg Forum with a focus on current issues that are common throughout Europe and the neighbouring countries: Meeting of Witness Protection Experts (17-19 October 2017, Warsaw), Meeting of Transportation Experts (19-20 October 2017, Warsaw), Meeting of General Police Chiefs (18-19 October 2017, Warsaw), Meeting of the Senior Official Representatives of the Migration Services (7 November 2017, Warsaw), the upcoming meeting of the Border Guard Chiefs (6-8 December 2017, Warsaw). The Members of the Salzburg Forum have strengthened cooperation in the field of crime prevention, border control and irregular migration and asylum. The Ministers welcomed the results achieved.

The Ministers took also note of the state of play on the selection procedure of the new Europol's Executive Director. Taking into account the importance of



this position for the general EU internal security architecture, they agreed that the selection procedure needs political consideration and that the final decision should be made at the ministerial level.

## **Upcoming Romanian Presidency of the Salzburg Forum**

The Ministers welcomed and endorsed the priorities of the upcoming Romanian Presidency and expressed their determination to continue the successful cooperation on issues of mutual interest within the framework of the Salzburg Forum.

## **Upcoming Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union**

The Ministers welcomed the priorities of the upcoming Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and expressed their commitment to support the Republic of Bulgaria in achieving their goals.

*Warsaw, 16 November 2017*