Bratislava, 16 September 2016

The Bratislava Declaration

Today we meet in Bratislava at a critical time for our European project. The Bratislava Summit of 27 Member States has been devoted to diagnose together the present state of the European Union and discuss our common future. We all agreed on the following general principles.

Although one country has decided to leave, the EU remains indispensable for the rest of us. In the aftermath of the wars and deep divisions on our continent, the EU secured peace, democracy and enabled our countries to prosper. Many countries and regions outside still only strive for such achievements. We are determined to make a success of the EU with 27 Member States, building on this joint history.

The EU is not perfect but it is the best instrument we have for addressing the new challenges we are facing. We need the EU not only to guarantee peace and democracy but also the security of our people. We need the EU to serve better their needs and wishes to live, study, work, move and prosper freely across our continent and benefit from the rich European cultural heritage.

We need to improve the communication with each other – among Member States, with EU institutions, but most importantly with our citizens. We should inject more clarity into our decisions. Use clear and honest language. Focus on citizens' expectations, with strong courage to challenge simplistic solutions of extreme or populist political forces.

We committed in Bratislava to offer to our citizens in the upcoming months a vision of an attractive EU they can trust and support. We are confident that we have the will and the capacity to achieve it.

We welcomed the State of the Union speech of the President of the Commission.

We held a broad debate on the key priorities for the coming months. On this basis, the President of the European Council, the Presidency of the Council and the Commission proposed the following work programme (the "Bratislava roadmap"):

The Bratislava Roadmap

I. General diagnosis and objective

- Determined to make a success of the EU at 27
- Many common challenges ahead of us: people concerned by a perceived lack of control and fears related to migration, terrorism, and economic and social insecurity. Need to tackle these issues as a matter of priority over the coming months
- Working together, the EU27 have the means to tackle these challenges. We are determined to find common solutions also as regards issues where we are divided; priority here and now to show unity and ensure political control over developments in order to build our common future
- Need to be clear about what the EU can do, and what is for the Member States to do, to make sure we can deliver on our promises

II. Migration and external borders

Objective

- Never to allow return to uncontrolled flows of last year and further bring down number of irregular migrants
- Ensure full control of our external borders and get back to Schengen
- Broaden EU consensus on long term migration policy and apply the principles of responsibility and solidarity

Concrete measures

a) full commitment to implementing the EU-Turkey statement as well as continued support to the countries of the Western Balkans

b) commitment today by a number of Member States to offer immediate assistance to strengthen the protection of Bulgaria's border with Turkey, and continue support to other frontline States

c) before the end of the year, full capacity for rapid reaction of the European Border and Coast Guard, now signed into law

d) migration compacts for cooperation and dialogue with third countries to lead to reduced flows of illegal migration and increased return rates, to be assessed by the December European Council

e) work to be continued to broaden EU consensus in terms of long term migration policy, including on how to apply the principles of responsibility and solidarity in the future

III. Internal and external security

- **Internal Security**

Objective

- Do everything necessary to support Member States in ensuring internal security and fighting terrorism

Concrete measures

a) intensified cooperation and information-exchange among security services of the Member States

b) adoption of the necessary measures to ensure that all persons, including nationals from EU Member States, crossing the Union's external borders will be checked against the relevant databases, that must be interconnected

c) start to set up a Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) to allow for advance checks and, if necessary, deny entry of visa-exempt travellers

d) a systematic effort against radicalisation, including through expulsions and entry bans where warranted as well as EU support to Member States' actions in prevention

- **External Security and Defence**

Objective

- In a challenging geopolitical environment, strengthen EU cooperation on external security and defence

Concrete measures

a) December European Council to decide on a concrete implementation plan on security and defence and on how to make better use of the options in the Treaties, especially as regards capabilities

b) start implementing the joint declaration with NATO immediately

IV. Economic and social development, youth

Objective

- Create a promising economic future for all, safeguard our way of life and provide better opportunities for youth

Concrete measures

a) in December: decision on extension of the European Fund for Strategic Investment in light of evaluation

b) Spring 2017 European Council: review progress as regards delivering on the different Single Market strategies (including Digital Single Market, Capital Markets Union, Energy Union)

c) October European Council to address how to ensure a robust trade policy that reaps the benefits of open markets while taking into account concerns of citizens

d) in December - decisions on EU support for Member States in fighting youth unemployment and on enhanced EU programmes dedicated to youth

V. Way ahead

- Deliver on promises: strengthen the mechanism for reviewing the implementation of decisions taken. Loyal co-operation and communication of Member States and institutions
- Bratislava is the beginning of a process. The coming formal European Council meetings will allow for concrete follow up on the themes mentioned here. The Heads of the 27 will meet informally at the beginning of 2017 in Valletta. The March 2017 celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties will bring together Heads in Rome and will be used to round off the process launched in Bratislava, and set out orientations for our common future together.

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