

Joint statement of the foreign ministers of the Visegrad Group at their meeting in Budapest, 2 March 2010

1. The foreign ministers of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia met in Budapest at a special meeting dedicated to the Eastern Partnership. The Visegrad ministers' meeting was followed by a conference with the participation of the European Commission, the Baltic States, Spain, Belgium, Sweden and the Eastern partners, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.
2. With regard to common historical experience with the partner countries and geographic proximity, Eastern Partnership has a specific importance for the Visegrad countries. The Ministers reconfirmed their commitment to the Eastern Partnership Declaration, adopted at the Summit on 7 May 2009 in Prague and expressed a strong interest in a dynamic development of the initiative. In particular, they stressed that the Partnership is based on commitments to the principles of international law and to fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as to market economy, sustainable development and good governance. They also highlighted the importance of the principles of inclusiveness, differentiation and conditionality, as well as joint ownership.
3. The Ministers welcomed the progress in the implementation achieved so far, both in the bilateral and multilateral dimensions of the Eastern Partnership. The Ministers also welcomed the progress achieved by the Civil Society Forum and in the parliamentary dimension.
4. The Visegrad Group promotes stability, good governance and economic development in the six countries of the Eastern Partnership (hereinafter the partner countries). The V4 therefore agreed to develop an increasingly close relationship with the Eastern partners.
5. The Visegrad Group will support thorough involvement of the European Commission in the implementation of the Eastern Partnership and will assist the Commission to take any steps which would contribute to reach the objectives of the Eastern Partnership.
6. In order to achieve the Partnership goals V4 Ministers will support political and socio-economic reforms, facilitating approximation and convergence towards the European Union within the Partnership framework. The Visegrad countries offer their help, expertise and experience in reforms reinforcing democratization, the rule of law and market economy, including through

effective utilisation of the possibilities provided by the Eastern Partnership. They will support the implementation of, and strive for involvement in, the Comprehensive Institution Building Programmes, with the respective countries. The ministers also highlighted the importance of connecting the region into European energy and transport infrastructure networks.

7. Ministers highlighted the need to make further progress in bilateral cooperation in line with the goals of the Eastern Partnership. The Visegrad countries will look for ways to enhance the availability of funding from EIB, EBRD, the World Bank and other international financial institutions to Eastern Partnership projects and initiatives.
8. The Ministers emphasised the need to take gradual steps towards visa regime liberalisation for individual partner countries and on a case by case basis provided that conditions for well-managed and secure mobility are in place. The Ministers stressed the need to strengthen the energy security cooperation of all participants with regard to long-term energy supply and transit, including through better regulation and energy efficiency.
9. The Ministers agreed that launching of the informal “Group of Friends” of the Eastern Partnership, consisting of non-EU countries willing to support or participate in the implementation of the Partnership, would bring added value for the cooperation with the Eastern partners.
10. The Visegrad Group supported the idea of holding an informal meeting of Eastern Partnership foreign ministers in Poland in May of this year and expressed their hope that the meeting will allow for maintaining the momentum of the initiative and giving it a strong political impetus after the first year of its operation.
11. With the objective of carrying the Eastern Partnership forward and guaranteeing an appropriate attention to and engagement of EU Member States as well as partner countries within it, the Ministers agreed to continue the implementation of the initiative during the period of the Hungarian and the Polish EU Presidency with sustained dynamism.