V4 Statement on the Western Balkans

The Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group countries met with partners from the Western Balkans in Prague on 12 September 2019. In this context, the V4 leaders:

- Reiterated their unequivocal support for the EU accession of the Western Balkans and their firm belief that reunification of Europe cannot be complete without them joining the European Union.

- Underlined that the EU enlargement policy provides an invaluable tool for achieving security, stability, and prosperity in the Western Balkans; consequently, a credible enlargement policy represents a strategic investment in the security, stability and prosperity of the EU as well.

- Stressed that accession is and will remain a merit-based process fully dependent on the objective progress achieved.

- Called on all EU stakeholders, in view of the October General Affairs Council, to maintain and consolidate the positive momentum created as a result of the substantial progress made in reforms as well as the entry into force of the historic Prespa Agreement by opening accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania.

- Emphasized that starting the negotiations in October 2019 will not only enable these two countries to focus even more on necessary reforms and serve as an important incentive for the whole region but it will also guarantee that the EU will continue to be the leading player in promoting a positive regional transformation.

- Expressed their expectations, in line with the Commission’s February 2018 Western Balkans Strategy, that ongoing accession negotiations with Serbia and Montenegro will be accelerated during the next Commission’s mandate accordingly to both states’ progress and that the EU will be ready to welcome the first countries meeting for conditions of accession during the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027.

- Expressed the hope that the reform processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo¹ in the coming period will strengthen the prospect of EU membership in the region.

- Reiterated their support for the Western Balkan partners in their determination to maintain stability in the region, strengthen the rule of law, fight organized crime and corruption, enhance resilience to hybrid threats, prevent radicalisation and keep the migratory movements under control.

- Expressed their determination to continue their cooperation in border protection.

- Took note of the strategic role of the Western Balkan region in enhancing the EU’s diversification of energy supply through the Southern Gas Corridor and expressed their determination to enhance the cooperation among the V4 and Western Balkans.

- Underlined the determination of the Visegrad Group countries to continue supporting extensive regional cooperation, good neighbourly relations, and reconciliation in the Western Balkans also through the International Visegrad Fund’s grants (Visegrad+ Grants), scholarship programmes or assistance to the Western Balkans Fund.

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