

Heads of State and Government of the Eastern Partnership Summit 2017

10 October 2017

Your Excellencies,

On behalf of the Baltic Assembly, we would like to address the leaders of the Eastern Partnership Summit regarding strategic and determined approach towards the Eastern Partnership countries in this tense geopolitical environment.

Since the Eastern Partnership Riga Summit, many strategically important goals have been accomplished and numerous initiatives implemented. We all support democratic, economically strong and stable Eastern Partnership countries. The Eastern Partnership framework has been instrumental in forging closer relations between the European Union and six neighbouring countries. The Eastern Partnership should remain at the core of the relations between the European Union and these countries, with the broader objective of creating conditions for stable democracy and prosperous societies and serving as a flexible framework that is responsive to the changing geopolitical environment, domestic developments and different goals of the Eastern Partnership countries. We also underline the need for both consolidation and reinforcement of the Eastern Partnership in the years to come.

We firmly believe that it is in our common interests to promote security, stability and prosperity in our own neighbourhood. We need to continue the political dialogue and tangible political relationship with the Eastern Partnership countries. We need to be more flexible and able to react to changing domestic and external circumstances and possible crises. We have to provide wider substantial assistance by offering our experience and support in the fields of security, public institutions, people-to-people contacts and businesses, and investment consolidation.

Our goal has always been to support neighbouring countries for them to achieve the same goals that are shared by all of us. Our policies towards the Eastern Partnership countries are rooted both in political support and in practical assistance. We should remain increasingly focused on ensuring stability, development and resilience of our Eastern Partnership neighbours.

The Baltic Assembly regards the Eastern Partnership countries as indivisible part of the European family. We are bound together by shared history, common values and interests, and shared future. Therefore, in 2007, prior to the approval of the Eastern Partnership, the Baltic Assembly started developing cooperation networks with a regional parliamentary organisation – the GUAM Parliamentary Assembly. Sharing the experience of the Baltic States in regard to European integration, promotion of democratic values in the region, and implementation of the Eastern Partnership priorities are among the main priorities of the parliamentary cooperation between the

Baltic Assembly and the GUAM PA. Parliamentarians from the Nordic Council, Benelux Parliament and Visegrad countries have joined our cooperation initiatives with the members of the GUAM Parliamentary Assembly – Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The Baltic Assembly has a vital interest in building a strong partnership between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries.

On 9 June 2017 in Riga, the Baltic Assembly, Nordic Council, Benelux Parliament, Visegrad countries and GUAM Parliamentary Assembly convened a meeting to assess parliamentary contribution within the framework of the Eastern Partnership. During the meeting, parliamentarians from the Baltic, Nordic, Benelux, Visegrad countries and the GUAM Parliamentary Assembly strongly reiterated their support to the European aspirations and European choice of the Eastern Partnership countries. On behalf of the Baltic Assembly, we would like to submit the following conclusions on our parliamentary dimension:

- We strongly support the Eastern Partnership as a strategic dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy and key element for stability and economic progress in the Eastern neighbourhood. Relations with the Eastern Partnership countries must remain a high priority of the European Union foreign policy. Cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries is based on common values, mutual interests and commitments, free will, respect for sovereignty and independence.
- We believe that it is crucial to strengthen cooperation and coordination efforts between the EU and the U.S. in regard to the Eastern Partnership policies that would give new impetus for development.
- Developments in the Eastern Partnership countries have increased the challenges we all face, from economic pressures to security threats. We need to develop policies to address the changing geopolitical reality. We recall the need to react strategically to the consequences of the challenging geopolitical environment in the Eastern Partnership countries. We suggest that the forthcoming Summit sets new long-term objectives and agenda, mobilising our Partners' governments and societies to pursue the necessary reforms, and responding to the geopolitical challenges and changed security constellations in the Eastern part of the European continent. We deem that the Brussels Summit will be a historical opportunity to reaffirm commitments of EU Member States to the Eastern Partnership countries by evidently marking the explicit roadmap for their future EU membership.
- The European Union and its Member States invest a lot in economic development, resilience, security, democracy and the rule of law in our Eastern neighbours. We all agree that there is a need to react strategically to the consequences of the present challenging geopolitical context for the Eastern Partnership countries and the European Union.
- EU Member States need to continue harmonised efforts to diminish the impact of pressure exerted by the Russian Federation towards the Eastern Partnership countries. The spirit and nature of the Eastern Partnership policy is non-confrontational. We must not accept Russian attempts to disallow sovereign Eastern Partnership countries to freely choose their further path, partners and alliances. The right to develop political, social, economic and cultural systems

as well as the right to determine laws and regulations is one of basic principles decisively protected in the commitments under the Helsinki Final Act and the OSCE Charter of Paris of 1990.

- The Eastern Partnership countries have protracted conflicts that can be only resolved through dialogue, diplomacy and honest engagement. We reiterate our firm support to the independence sovereignty and territorial integrity of the GUAM countries and commitment to peaceful conflict resolution.
- Current EU sanctions policy and principles in conjunction with the situation in Ukraine must remain in place until Russia returns to the principles of international law, including full and irreversible implementation of the Minsk Agreements.
- We express our full support to the strong determination of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine in their aspirations of European integration. Full implementation of the Association Agreements, including DCFTA, should be the main priority; they serve as a blueprint and practical roadmap for comprehensive reforms, opening up trade opportunities, investment and developments that should be supported further. All these European frameworks and initiatives serve to interest of the Eastern Partnership countries bringing closer to European values and further political approximation with the European Union.
- The Eastern Partnership countries are very diverse in their domestic development and the level of bilateral relations with the European Union. We must continue to respect national differences and aspirations, pursue individualised and tailor-made approaches in our relationship, based on the needs and aspirations of each Eastern Partnership country. Flexibility and individual approach must remain the guiding principles of the Eastern Partnership to ensure it addresses the real needs and interests, for the sake of all our citizens. The principle of differentiation must be applied in our engagement with the Partners. We have to design approaches to promote progress in relations with those partner countries which seek truly dynamic relations with the European Union. The Eastern Partnership should be more targeted to the Partners' needs and aspirations.
- Cooperation within the Eastern Partnership framework should focus mainly on sectorial issues and cross-sectoral approach. We believe that particular attention should be given to developing of interconnections in energy and transport, expansion of business links, creating new education and training opportunities. We support a more coherent, comprehensive and efficient implementation of the Eastern Partnership policy by focusing on tangible benefits. We welcome the increased focus on concrete objectives in the key priority areas. We emphasise the importance of pursuing the implementation of the four priorities adopted at the Riga Summit: strengthening of institutions and good governance; economic development and market opportunities; connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change; mobility and people-to-people contacts, as outlined in “20 Deliverables for 2020”.
- First and foremost, the Eastern Partnership instruments must serve the interests of our citizens for them to live in secure, stable and prosperous environment.

Jointly we should look for the most efficient communication strategies with our societies about the advantages of the Eastern Partnership initiative. We have to focus more on practical initiatives bringing tangible results, first of all, increasing the capacities of the EU East Stratcom Task Force. Both EU Member States and the Eastern Partners need to intensify communication with their civil societies to overcome public fears and doubts. Strategic communication is of key importance to strengthen resilience of the Eastern Partnership countries and EU member states against hostile disinformation campaigns coming from third parties.

- The Eastern Partnership countries have made significant efforts to strengthen democracy, the rule of law and protection of human rights, to implement a number of reforms in various fields. By implementing such reforms, the Eastern Partnership countries send a very powerful signal that, in the complicated geopolitical environment, the implemented reforms bring tangible advantages and development of the countries. We highly estimate the significant progress of reforms implemented by the Eastern Partnership countries. Still, the Eastern Partnership countries face numerous challenges related to the constitutional reform, operations of law enforcement bodies, and reformation of the judiciary. We understand that reforms in the field of anti-corruption, public sector, and economy demand more time and efforts both by the political leadership and societies of the Eastern Partnership countries. Implementation of reforms is a difficult process both politically and socially but there are no other alternatives to ensure development and prosperity.
- Modernisation and economic growth come only alongside democratic reforms. It is strategically important to continue the reforms to strengthen governance and democratic values, to fight against corruption. We would like to underline that it is impossible to expect the growth of economy and welfare without the implementation of the necessary reforms. We recognise the need to continue with the reforms in the Eastern Partnership countries, bringing them closer to the EU, strengthen the internal stability and resilience of the Partners, enhance investment in integrated border management, continue the mobility agenda and the interconnectivity projects.
- EU Member States offer experience and financial support to the Partners. In addition to the existing EU funding EU Member State financial support, and foreign direct investment, we would like to initiate the development of the “Marshall Plan with the Eastern Partnership countries.” We would invite EU institutions together with the European Investment Bank to create a sizeable EU lending capacity in the area and to develop instruments that could boost economic growth and reforms, as well as the Eastern Partners’ implementation capacity and EU visibility. We should remember that stronger Eastern Partnership countries means a stronger Europe. Moreover, the mobilisation of political and financial support to the Eastern Partnership countries would send a very strong message that the EU Member States stay determined on the path of reforms of the Eastern Partnership countries. The “Marshall Plan with the Eastern Partnership countries” would not only mean the mobilisation of all efforts, bringing cooperation to a new dimension and providing new solutions to challenges; all the more, the introduction of the “Marshall Plan” would serve as an expression of our common political will and determination.

- Revising its Southern and Eastern Partnerships, the European Union needs to stay focused on both dimensions equally. Equilibrium within the EU neighbourhood policy between the Southern and Eastern dimensions is essential. The development of the “Marshall Plan with the Eastern Partnership countries” could serve as a tool to ensure equilibrium between these two dimensions of the EU neighbourhood policy.
- In the long run, however, the Eastern Partnership cannot succeed without delivering on its transformational agenda. To meet the transformational challenge, the EU must adjust the Eastern Partnership instruments. The current incentives and support for reforms are insufficient. EU policies need to become involved far more directly in the reforms, effectively allying EU efforts with the reform forces on the ground, especially while implementing the EU Association Agenda commitments. This shift in the Eastern Partnership could be described as a change from supporting reforms toward accepting joint responsibility for them and increasing EU presence in these countries. The EU Support Group for Ukraine is a good practice to continue and follow by other associated countries with the EU. We are confident that there is a need to develop a long-term support plan for the Eastern Partnership countries. We see many challenges ahead, especially in setting instruments and objectives for gradual political and economic integration of the EU Eastern Partnership countries. We can play a specific role in tackling these massive challenges by offering our knowledge, experience, skills and getting directly involved, taking joint steps aimed at intensifying the implementation of the AAs/DCFTAs and joint monitoring of this process. Simultaneously, we have to listen more carefully to the needs and national differences of the Eastern Partnership countries, thus developing a new dialogue format.
- We underline the need to strengthen the state and societal resilience in the Eastern Partnership countries. We repeatedly encourage the Eastern Partnership countries to proceed actively with their reform processes as an essential element of resilience building and strengthening of internal stability. The Eastern Partnership countries and their societies should be ready to use all future “windows of opportunities” offered through EU programmes and partnerships.
- National parliaments as democratic representatives of the people and by the people have a special role in advancing relations and monitoring implementation of reforms for the benefit of societies. Democracy, transparency and good governance are shared values of the Member States of the European Union. National parliaments should continue to provide their support to the Eastern Partnership countries in anchoring European values. A strong and lasting democracy cannot be developed in a short time. Well-rooted democracy and internal trust strengthen societies and are conditions for the development and welfare of countries.
- Bilateral and multilateral formats of the Eastern Partnership are equally significant. Regional cooperation among the Eastern Partnership countries plays a crucial role in EU integration. The experience of the Baltic, Benelux, Nordic and Visegrad countries clearly show that there are many fields where

regional solutions are needed; moreover, on international level, a common regional position is stronger and more persuasive compared to single efforts.

- Developments in the Eastern Partnership countries have a direct impact on Europe. Sustainable growth and development of the Eastern Partnership countries will benefit each of us. We express our readiness to further strengthen the Eastern Partnership in accordance with the Riga Declaration in expanding active cooperation and contacts among parliamentarians through our regional parliamentary organisations: the Baltic Assembly, Benelux Parliament, Nordic Council, and GUAM Parliamentary Assembly. We have a continued, consistent and strong commitment to the Eastern Partnership, and we are ready to work closely in implementing its goals.

On behalf of the Baltic Assembly, we expect that the Brussels Summit will provide an opportunity to reshape the Eastern Partnership policy on the principle of inclusiveness for all countries within the framework, while responding to the increasing need of differentiation among them. We are confident that the Eastern Partnership Summit in Brussels and its tangible achievements will be important for the future of the Eastern Partnership. We truly believe that the Summit will bring new dynamism to the Eastern Partnership. We firmly deem that the forthcoming Eastern Partnership Summit will reaffirm our common political commitment to the Partnership, highlight the achieved results in priority areas, and present a future-oriented agenda.

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