



## **Chair's Conclusions of the Heads' meeting of the London Western Balkans Summit, 10 July 2018**

On 10 July 2018, the United Kingdom welcomed the Heads of Government of the Berlin Process participants, the Prime Ministers of Bulgaria and Greece, as well as representatives of the European Institutions, International Financial Institutions, the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO). The London Summit built on the previous Berlin, Vienna, Paris and Trieste Summits in the framework of the Berlin Process, as well as the 25 February 2018 London European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) Western Balkans Investment Summit; 18 April 2018 Skopje Digital Summit and 17 May 2018 Sofia EU-Western Balkans Summit.

We congratulated Prime Ministers Zaev and Tsipras on the historic agreement signed by their Foreign Ministers on 17 June 2018 and the subsequent steps being taken to implement the agreement.

### **Shared European Values**

We reaffirmed our commitment to achieving a stable, secure and prosperous Western Balkans region, anchored to European values and systems and contributing to European security. We also unanimously reaffirmed our unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans. We agreed that we remained committed to entrenching democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, and that civil society and independent media played a crucial role in this.

### **Prosperity and connectivity**

Prosperity and connectivity are at the heart of the Berlin Process agenda and vital for the region's success. We agreed that the connectivity agenda should remain a core element of the Berlin Process. We welcomed the report back from the Economy Ministers' Meeting in Vienna on 4 July 2018, and the [Chair's Conclusions](#) of that meeting. We confirmed the [transformative potential of the Regional Economic Area \(REA\)](#) and agreed the need to strengthen economic ties between Western Balkans Six (WB6) economies, Berlin Process partners and EU Institutions.

We acknowledged that corruption hinders economic growth and investment, weakens democratic institutions, destroys public confidence and undermines the rule of law. We therefore welcomed commitments by the WB6 to tackle corruption and address organised crime.

We also agreed that digitalisation has vast potential for the WB6 to boost innovation, employment and competitiveness. In order to capitalise on this, we agreed the need to address the digital skills gap, such that labour forces were better equipped to take part in digital transformation and foster entrepreneurship.

We welcomed the Fourth Joint Science Conference of the Berlin Process held in June 2018 in Rome and the progress made towards the establishment of the Western Balkans Research Foundation, as decided in 2017 in Trieste. That conference emphasised the need for concerted action by policy-makers, academia and business, and the need for support from the EU to foster smart growth and digital transformation.

We looked forward to the implementation of the Sofia Priority Agenda adopted at the EU-Western Balkans Summit on 17 May 2018.

## **Regional cooperation**

We welcomed the positive progress the region and its neighbours have made in resolving bilateral issues and the report back from the Foreign Ministers' Meeting on July 9 2018 and the [Chair's Conclusions](#) of that meeting.

We agreed that, in order to prosper in the future, we needed to continue to deal with the legacy of the past. We welcomed the signing by Berlin Process participants of the *Joint Declaration on Regional Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations in the Framework of the Berlin Process*, and looked forward to future annual reports from governments of the Western Balkans on further progress. We also welcomed the signing by Berlin Process participants of the *Joint Declarations on War Crimes and Missing Persons in the Framework of the Berlin Process* and the progress made towards the development of the regional Framework Plan to Address the Issue of Missing Persons from the Conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. We look forward to its early adoption and implementation.

## **Security**

We acknowledged that collectively we faced many security threats, including serious and organised crime; violent extremism and terrorism and its financing; corruption; money laundering and financial crime; trafficking of human beings and smuggling of migrants; the trafficking of weapons and drugs; and cybercrime and threats to cyber security. We reaffirmed our commitment to deepening regional cooperation, and agreed on the need to support and enhance the many existing mechanisms for cooperation.

We welcomed the report back from the Interior Ministers' Meeting on 9 July 2018 and the [Chair's Conclusions](#) of that meeting. We also welcomed the signing by the WB6 of a *Joint Declaration on the Principles of Information-Exchange in the Field of Law Enforcement* to enhance such regional cooperation. We warmly welcomed the endorsement of the *Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons and their ammunition in the Western Balkans*. We agreed that implementing these commitments was essential, and welcomed the agreement by the WB6 on the *Terms of Reference for a Berlin Process Security Commitments Steering Group*.

We agreed that cooperation with, and support for, partners in the Western Balkans region was crucial for the exchange of information on migratory flows and the prevention of illegal migration. We also agreed that capacities for border protection and for the improvement of return and readmission procedures needed to be enhanced.

## **Youth and Civil Society**

We welcomed the role young people and civil society had played in shaping the London Summit. We strongly agreed that young people are the region's biggest asset. We also agreed that more needed to be done to harness their potential. We remained concerned about the high levels of brain drain and youth unemployment in the region. We welcomed the important work of the RYCO in promoting reconciliation and increasing regional cooperation between young people. We reaffirmed our support to RYCO and the need to underpin RYCO's engagement with sufficient resources in order to realise its full potential.

## **Looking ahead**

We welcomed the strong contribution of the Berlin Process to the stability, security and prosperity of the Western Balkan region. As part of our collective commitment to the region, we welcomed: the announcement by the European Commission of the establishment of a new €150m guarantee instrument, building on the pledge at the Sofia Summit of €190m to enhance transport connectivity, and also the signature of the Transport Community Treaty Headquarters agreement; France and Germany's Small Arms and Light Weapons Initiative; the ongoing work by Italy on their [anti-corruption initiative](#) launched at the 2017 Trieste Summit; and the announcements by the United Kingdom.

We confirmed our commitment to work together through the Berlin Process to implement the outcomes from the London Summit, as we looked forward to the next Summit in Poland in 2019.