

**VISEGRÁD GROUP. JOINT DECLARATION OF THE CHAIRMEN OF THE
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND DEFENCE
COMMITTEES OF THE VISEGRÁD FOUR COUNTRIES ADOPTED AT
THEIR 5TH MEETING
(BRATISLAVA, 26TH TO 28TH OF JANUARY 2000)**

1. We, the representatives of the Parliaments of the countries of Central Europe, having common historical ties, consider it our common interest to co-operate in the process of European integration and to share common responsibility for the construction of a stable and secure continent. We see the Visegrád co-operation as a link to the accession process of the participating countries to the European Union.
2. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland fully support the endeavours of the Slovak Republic to join NATO. This orientation is in keeping with the original meaning and mission of the Visegrád co-operation since its beginning in 1991.
3. Our four countries are aware of the fact that security is indivisible and that it is necessary to perceive it in both global and regional contexts. The Washington summit of the North Atlantic Alliance preserved the possibility of the admission of Slovakia and other countries in the advantages of collective defence. We consider the confirmation of the Alliance's policy of open doors to be a key factor for the strengthening of security in the Euro-Atlantic area. NATO should recognize the political and economic reforms in Slovakia and other countries by proceeding with the second round of enlargement.
4. We follow with positive interest the process of the development of Common Defence and Security Policy of the European Union and we are ready to take part in this effort. We do want to participate in the discussions on the formation of this policy, particularly in the field of crisis management and Petersberg operations along with all the non-EU NATO members. We perceive this policy as enhancing the Euro-Atlantic security, of which the North Atlantic Alliance is the cornerstone. In this connection we are convinced that a wider co-operation of the V4 in the field of defence industry and procurement would be a positive contribution of our governments.
5. Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia support the common efforts of democratic countries to build and strengthen a community of peace, stability, security, democracy and prosperity. We are in favour of such an international order in which war is an unacceptable way of resolving conflicts between states, in which threats and risks are identified and solved together. At the same time we recognize the necessity to protect those values with real defence capabilities.
6. The V4 group appreciates the progress that has been made by its member countries in the negotiation process with the EU since our last meeting and at the same time sincerely welcomes that Slovakia was invited by the Helsinki Summit to the accession negotiations as well. The V4 countries welcome the statement of the Helsinki Summit, namely the EU readiness to be prepared for enlargement and for admission of new member states by the end of 2002.

7. The pace of the accession negotiations should be accelerated in order to conclude them so as to enable simultaneous ratification procedures in the member states of both first accession treaties and the results of the Inter-Governmental Conference in 2002.

8. It is in our common interest that all the four countries are in the first group of associated countries to be admitted as EU members. At the same time the participating parties recognise that no candidate for EU membership is expected to wait for another country after fulfilling the necessary requirements.

9. We are of the opinion that the international effort to bring about stability and peace in Bosnia, Kosovo and other parts of Southern Europe must continue until all the people in the region feel safe and secure enough to participate in the benefits of European trade, co-operation and integration. In this context, making the Danube river navigable as soon as possible is of much importance for the development of economic co-operation in Central and Southern Europe.

10. We shall closely monitor the progress to democracy in Russia following the presidential elections there. We support the Recommendation No. 1444 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the situation in Chechnya. We are interested in developing partnership and friendly relations with the Russian Federation and with other countries of the CIS, based on the principles of mutual respect and benefits. We believe that the genuine progress of democracy in Russia will be based on the respect for human rights and the principles of civil society.

11. The meeting in Bratislava has shown the lasting value of co-operation of parliamentary bodies in a regional framework and the wisdom of the decision of the Chairmen of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committees of the Parliaments of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic at their last meeting in Budapest to expand the process by including Slovakia and the Chairmen of European Integration Committees of all the four countries.

12. We agree that our co-ordination be continued further in the future and that our next meeting takes place in Autumn 2000 in Poland and may primarily be focused on the issues related to the future functioning of the countries of the Visegrád Four within the framework of the Schengen Convention.

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