

JOINT STATEMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTERS OF THE VISEGRÁD COUNTRIES (PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC, 9 JUNE 2000)

1. We, the Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic have met in Prague to review Visegrád cooperation in the period since our last meeting in Bratislava and to define the further prospects of cooperation within the Visegrád Group.
2. We are pleased to state that cooperation between our four countries developed over the past Visegrád Year in an effective way in many fields and at various levels. The framework for our cooperation is provided by the Programme Document approved by the Bratislava Summit in 1999. The regular meetings of V4 representatives at various levels testify to the viability of the Visegrád Group proving to be beneficial for its members.
3. We welcome the signing of the Agreement Concerning the Establishment of the International Visegrád Fund regarding it as a crucial step towards realizing a very significant joint project to promote the development of cooperation of the Visegrád Group in the field of culture, science and research, education, youth contacts, cross-border cooperation and sports.
4. We are committed to further strengthening cooperative relations between our countries by drawing from, and building upon the experience with other regional cooperation frameworks operating successfully in other regions of Europe. Our aim is to promote regional integration, cohesion and solidarity in Central Europe, as a part of the broader European and transatlantic structures.
5. We note with satisfaction the interest of other countries, in particular Slovenia, in developing good relations and close cooperation with the Visegrád Group. Therefore we declare the readiness of the Visegrád Group to work together with other states in fields of common interest. We consider cooperation in concrete projects involving the widest possible spectrum of our common interests a particularly effective and prospective form of cooperation.
6. Enhancing public awareness of and greater civic involvement in the Visegrád cooperation remain among our future objectives. Cooperation at regional and local levels focused on intensified everyday contacts will therefore represent an important dimension of the V4 activities. In today's rapidly changing world it is important to develop and strengthen the Central European identity. Active involvement of representatives of local self-governments and non-governmental organizations in programmes of Visegrád Cooperation could significantly promote these efforts.
7. We continue to attribute the utmost importance to the significant role played by the North-Atlantic Alliance in enhancing security in the Euro-Atlantic area. We believe that NATO membership of the three countries substantially contributes to the enhancement of security both in our region and beyond it. We are committed to maintaining NATO's open-door-policy, as an important tool of extending security and stability. In this context, Slovakia's future NATO membership is a common interest of the Visegrád Countries. Therefore they decided to continue to work together to achieve this objective.

8. We support the development of a more visible European role in the field of security and defence and are therefore ready to contribute to the European Security and Defence Policy developed by the European Union.

9. The common perspective of the Visegrád Group countries is their membership in the European Union. We share the view that it is of utmost importance to keep momentum of EU enlargement. We express our conviction that the increase in the number of the negotiating candidate countries should not lead to the slow down of the pace of negotiations. We declare our strong commitment to the common values providing the cohesive force of the European Union, and also express our firm conviction that the prospective accession of our countries to the EU will considerably reinforce this cohesion. We hope that the Visegrád Group will preserve its significance also after our entry into the Union.

10. We welcome the opening of accession negotiations between the European Union and Slovak Republic. This step further enhances the possibility of exchanging experience in the negotiation process both within the V4 Group and within other multilateral or bilateral contacts respecting the specific conditions and positions of individual V4 countries. One of the priorities of renewed Visegrád Cooperation, i.e. assistance to Slovakia in its integration efforts is thus being met. This situation opens new horizons for future Visegrád Cooperation.

11. We would welcome the adoption by the European Council at its Nice December session of the scenario of the further course of the accession negotiations that would also include the date of the completion of these negotiations with the most advanced candidate countries.

12. The Visegrád Countries express their interest in adopting the environmental standards of the EU as soon as possible and applying them efficiently with special regard to the preservation of their specific natural and environmental values. In order to enhance sustainable development we urge the integration of environmental perspectives into sectoral strategies and the closer cooperation among the Visegrád Countries in the matter of preventing and treating cross-border pollution.

13. We welcome the progress the Slovak Republic has achieved in her effort to become a member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and express the hope that the accession process will be completed in the near future. Visegrád Countries' Governments will continue to support the accession of the Slovak Republic to the OECD in June 2000.

14. The Visegrád Countries are ready to contribute to and be helpful in the implementation of EU strategies towards Russia and the Ukraine. In a meantime we express the hope that the results of the presidential election and the activities of the new government of the Russian Federation will give a fresh impetus to the process of reforms and democratization in the country, as well as enhancing relations with the countries of our region. We believe that this process will lead to a peaceful political solution to the Chechen conflict and will ensure the respect for human rights.

15. We underline the importance the international community attaches to the reconstruction of the Southeast-European region. It is of our vital interest to take further measures to build confidence, mutual understanding and to intensify efforts in order to

strengthen regional security and stability. In this respect our countries will continue to contribute actively to ongoing peacekeeping operations in the region as well as to the implementation of the Stability Pact initiative. We are deeply disturbed by the intensification of the repressive actions of the regime on independent media, democratic opposition forces and civil society in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. We reiterate firm support of our countries for the rightful struggle of the peoples of the FRY for democracy and freedom.

[Quelle: <http://www.Visegrád.org/events.php?kdy=9june2000>]