

**JOINT STATEMENT ADOPTED AT THE 9TH MEETING OF CHAIRMEN OF
THE COMMITTEES ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND SECURITY,
AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION OF THE PARLIAMENTS OF THE CZECH
REPUBLIC, HUNGARY, POLAND AND SLOVAKIA
(BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA 12-13 JANUARY 2003)**

1. We, representatives of the Committees on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security, and European Integration of the national Parliaments of the Visegrád Group (V4) countries, met in Bratislava to discuss the cooperation between our countries with an emphasis on the EU accession, the security and defence policy and the work of the Convention on the Future of Europe.

2. We welcome the results of the historic EU summit in Copenhagen, 12 – 13 December 2002, where the candidate countries were invited to become members of the EU, what is an important milestone in the process of the unification of the European continent. In this connection, we appreciate the work of the Danish Presidency, which significantly contributed to the successful conclusion of the accession negotiations.

3. We expect support from the Parliaments of the EU Member States in the process of ratification of the accession treaties, which is an inevitable precondition for our countries in achieving full-fledged EU membership. We are convinced that the Greek Presidency will uphold the complete integration of the acceding countries into the EU institutions.

4. We welcome the fact that the citizens of our countries have the possibility to decide on the EU membership through referenda. We agreed in a mutual exchange of informations concerning the preparation and course of referenda and to actively participate in the campaigns before referenda in the V4 countries.

5. We support the efforts of the Convention on the Future of Europe to conclude its work with an aim to submit a draft of a new constitutional treaty to the European Council, which will play a key role in the simplification of the EU institutional system and the realisation of the principle of transparency, and get the EU closer to the citizens.

6. We call on the Governments of the EU Member States to enable full-fledged participation and to guarantee de facto equal rights for the acceding countries in the next Inter-Governmental Conference that will, following the recommendations of the Convention on the Future of Europe, decide on the new shape of the legal foundation of the EU. A step to reform the Union is a decision on the future of the integrated Europe, which should not take place without our voices and our contribution.

7. We welcome and fully support the decision of the NATO Prague Summit where Slovakia was invited to start the accession talks on its Alliance membership. This decision, being historical for Slovakia, would never be possible without the political and military reforms in the Slovak Republic, and the support from other NATO countries, in particular the V4 countries. The Committees on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security, and European Integration of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland support the fast ratification of the Accession Protocol of the SR to the Treaty on NATO in their national Parliaments.

8. We emphasize the cooperation of the V4 countries considering the security threats and new challenges of the 21st century. We support the creation of new military facilities and specializations in the frames of the North Atlantic Alliance as it was adopted at the Prague summit.

9. We declare our determination to continue the cooperation between the V4 countries in the present way also after joining the European Union. We do consider the V4 cooperation as an important stabilizing factor of the Central European region. We express our readiness to cooperate also with other countries.

10. We agreed to hold our next meeting in Prague.

[Quelle: <http://www.visegradgroup.org/events.php?kdy=1213january2003>]