

**Joint statement  
on the occasion of III. Slovak - Polish intergovernmental consultations**

(Stará Ľubovňa, Vyšné Ružbachy, April 22, 2022)

### **I. Introduction**

A good neighbourly cooperation is one of the essential preconditions for a successful European and foreign policy. Dialogue and understanding are important tools for its further comprehensive development.

This motivation stood at the beginning of the tradition of joint consultations between the representatives of the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Poland. Today's meetings in Stará Ľubovňa and Vyšné Ružbachy are an important contribution to its further progress. They set out priority issues of common interest for the upcoming years, which can then be translated into concrete and mutually beneficial initiatives.

The current challenges, which we are facing in a changing and increasingly unpredictable world call for our increased commitment. They emphasise the importance of cooperation, solidarity and cohesion. They demonstrate the true value of partnerships and alliances.

Russia's aggression in Ukraine poses the most serious threat to the Euro-Atlantic space in decades. Nowadays, European unity and transatlantic coordination play a key role in ensuring European and Euro-Atlantic security and represent a solid basis to our further cooperation.

### **II. The bilateral dimension**

We reaffirm our interest in maintaining and further deepening the dynamic political, professional and technical dialogue at all levels. The aim is to focus on concrete and practical solutions based on European standards that will benefit both countries and, above all, their citizens. In the light of current challenges, we will continue bilateral political cooperation in the field of security. Our defence cooperation has also been gaining more importance. We welcome the joint activities of the armed forces in the field of military aviation and airspace protection, comprehensive capability development, military training and education, as well as cyber defence. A special benefit is the Slovak-Polish leadership in the NATO Counter Intelligence Centre of Excellence.

We will pay active attention to the further development of business and investment interactions. Despite the long-term growth trend, their potential is far from exhausted. We want to make better use of opportunities that will strengthen the competitiveness but also the sustainability of our economies. We want to use initiatives in areas such as information and communication technologies, digitalisation, climate change, industrial research and innovation, and smart technologies.

We are also aware of the importance of developing connectivity through quality and safe road and rail infrastructure (corridors Baltic Sea-Mediterranean as well as Baltic Sea-Black Sea-Aegean Sea integrating the Via Carpatia and Rail Carpatia routes). It is not only a matter of mobility but also stimulates economic growth, including the development

of tourism, small and medium-sized enterprises, science and research, technology and industrial parks. Our countries will therefore continue to build and modernise the Baltic Sea-Mediterranean corridor infrastructure, as well as, support the integration of the new Baltic Sea-Black Sea-Aegean Sea corridor into the TEN-T network, promote joint initiatives in sustainable transport, actively support the construction of the V4 high-speed line, work to conclude an agreement on cross-border rail transport, and to actively support the development of rail connections, both for passengers and freight transport.

The success story of our relationship is written by cross-border cooperation delivering tangible benefits and serving people's everyday needs at a local level. We believe that the proposal for the Poland-Slovakia cross-border cooperation programme for 2021-2027, with an expected total budget of more than 161 million EUR, which was recently submitted to the European Commission, will be an incentive for effective and joint solutions to the most important challenges being identified. In this regard, we will support the further development of contacts between the citizens and the institutions of the Polish-Slovak border.

We want to actively seek and take advantage of the new opportunities offered by tourism. It is not only an essential factor for our economies but also a motivation for uniting our efforts to protect the common natural and cultural-historical heritage.

Strengthening Slovak-Polish relations is not possible without further strengthening their interpersonal dimension, rapprochement and a mutual understanding between the citizens of our countries. The further development of cultural, academic and youth contacts (including the opportunity to learn/study the language of the neighbouring country) is beneficial without neglecting the needs and protection of the interests of members of expatriate communities.

The basic key to achieve these goals is undoubtedly inter-institutional and inter-ministerial cooperation, which provides open channels for immediate communication as well as the mutual exchange of experience and best practices.

In this context, we also want to pay special attention to social and family policy, nature, biodiversity and landscape protection (including the national park and environmental burden management), food safety and quality, as well as public finance and economic governance issues.

### **III. European, Euro-Atlantic and security dimension**

We strongly condemn Russia's criminal, illegal, unprovoked and unjustifiable invasion of our common neighbour, Ukraine. We call on the Russian Federation to immediately end the war in Ukraine and to unconditionally withdraw all forces from Ukraine, as well as, on Belarus to put an immediate end to the support and assistance with the Russian invasion. We will actively promote the investigation of crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by Russian forces against the civilian population of Ukraine, and we will demand accountability for the perpetrators: both the immediate perpetrators as well as the policy-makers.

We express our full and unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. Slovakia and Poland, together with NATO allies and EU partners, are ready to further mobilise and provide

Ukraine with all the necessary assistance to defend its state and its people against Russia's invasion, including strengthening Ukraine's defence capabilities. Together, we will call for further severe sanctions in order to cut off the Russian military machine from sources of funding. We call on the entire international community to join forces and help end the barbaric Russian invasion. On a daily basis, Ukraine proves that it belongs to a democratic and free world, which respects democratic principles and human life. Together, we will advocate that when the European Commission presents its assessment, which will enable Ukraine to become part of our European family once all the conditions are met, Ukraine has to be granted a candidate status without any delay. Ukraine's future is the EU.

Russia's attack on Ukraine threatens the global order based on international law and the European security architecture. As members of both the EU and NATO, we will work together to strengthen transatlantic unity.

We expect that the June NATO Summit in Madrid, with the adoption of the new NATO Strategic Concept, will reaffirm the collective defence of Allies as the main role of the Alliance, will decide on a permanent enhanced presence of NATO forces on the eastern flank, from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. Through joint efforts, we will strengthen the resilience of our countries and societies to hybrid, cyber and information attacks and counteract them by developing our capabilities to respond to aggressors. We will also work together to implement the EU Strategic Compass to strengthen the EU's and our capacity and capability to act, in particular through increased defence spending and activities to improve military mobility. The regional dimension of our security cooperation, based on the activities of the Bucharest Nine, remains an important element.

We are currently facing the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has caused an unprecedented influx of refugees to Poland, Slovakia and other European countries. We will make every effort to continue providing effective and rapid assistance, as well as a shelter for war refugees fleeing from Ukraine, in the spirit of unrelenting solidarity. In this context, we will also work together to ensure that the European Commission prepares further legislation that will allow easy-to-use and flexible funding to cover at least part of the EU Member States' expenditures for implementing measures in areas such as accommodation, social assistance, access to education or healthcare.

The Russian attack on Ukraine threatens food security and the stability of supply chains of the European Union and of course, also of Ukraine and other countries, and thus it has been increasing the pressure on prices in the global market. Ukraine needs immediate food support, as well as support for maintaining the continuity of agricultural production in the coming years. For this reason, we have declared and made an offer to Ukraine to export agricultural production through alternative routes of our territories.

Together, we will call for reviewing and adjusting the EU's energy strategy. Diversification of energy resources as well as transport routes are a precondition for reducing energy dependency on gas and oil supplies and for strengthening Europe's energy security. The completion and operation of the Veľké Kapušany - Strachocina interconnector is in line with the goal of completing and improving our gas interconnections set out by the European Council Conclusions of 24 and 25 March 2022<sup>1</sup> and is, therefore, an important step for the EU as a whole. Achieving this historic

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<sup>1</sup>EUCO 1/22, par. 17 c).

milestone will allow us to access gas supplies from the north, including LNG capacities, as well as alternative gas sources from the south, and thus strengthening the security of supply for both countries.

We will act together and in coordination with the other EU Member States to increase the diversification of resources and energy security, with an emphasis on maintaining European unity and solidarity and creating a common European Union mechanism for the purchase of gas, LNG and hydrogen.

A further increase in energy carrier prices and production costs due to the Russian aggression in Ukraine, as well as a decline in production profitability, justify the need to support EU agricultural producers in the area of fertilisers and fodder. Together with the other EU Member States, we will take steps to ensure that the EU is self-sufficient in developing fertilisers and cultivating protein crops.

It is also in our common interest to continue the transition to a climate-neutral economy along the lines of the commitments agreed upon at the EU level while preserving social equity and taking into account the initial conditions and vulnerabilities of the individual Member States and their energy mixes. At the same time, we must keep in mind that the transition to a climate-neutral economy cannot lead to a dependence on individual suppliers of raw materials and technologies necessary for green transformation.

Our long-term foreign policy priorities include European Neighbourhood Policy. We advocate for a dynamic and fair accession process of the Western Balkan countries, leading to a full EU membership. Current developments confirm the strategic importance of the Eastern Partnership policy aimed at promoting stability, prosperity and reforms. We support the associated countries: Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia in their efforts for EU membership.

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