

## **Israel - Visegrad Group Joint Statement**

### **Joint Statement on the occasion of the annual summit of the prime ministers of the Visegrad Group (V4) and the Prime Minister of the State of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu**

The Heads of Government of Hungary, the Republic of Poland, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic and the Prime Minister of the State of Israel convened in Budapest on 19 July 2017 at the first summit meeting between the V4 countries and the State of Israel. The participating countries were represented by H.E. Mr. Viktor Orbán, Prime Minister of Hungary, H.E. Mrs. Beata Szydło, Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland, H.E. Mr. Bohuslav Sobotka, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, H.E. Mr. Robert Fico, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic and H.E. Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel.

1. Recognizing the shared universal values and principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy, market economy, the rule of law and good governance, the V4 and the State of Israel took note with satisfaction of the extensive political, economic and cultural ties, which they have developed since the establishment of diplomatic relations with each other. On the basis of the substantial progress that has been made, the Five intend to further develop their partnership.

2. The five leaders reiterated their commitment towards the enhancement of EU-Israel relations in areas of mutual interest, including cooperation on economic, political, strategic, regional, innovation, and people-to-people issues. To this end, they underlined the need to promote an improved relationship between the State of Israel and the European Union and strong interest to convene the EU-Israel Association Council as soon as possible, which could lead to the setting of new partnership priorities, in accordance with the reviewed European Neighborhood Policy.

The V4 and the State of Israel welcomed their mutually beneficial economic cooperation since the establishment of their diplomatic ties. They agreed to promote a sustainable increase and development of their trade and investment volume.

3. The V4 and the State of Israel decided to further deepen their partnership aimed at building innovative and creative economies through enhanced joint cooperation in R&D, science, technology and innovation, start-ups and digitalization of industry and service sectors.

4. The leaders emphasized the need to promote the mobility of researchers and students, building on the relevant existing frameworks and instruments established at the bilateral and regional levels, as well as within the framework of the EU - Israel cooperation.

5. In order to encourage cooperation and dissemination of knowledge and know-how between high-tech industries in the V4 and the State of Israel, designated programs for the specialization of students and high-tech entrepreneurs and experts of the V4 will be established.

6. The V4 and the State of Israel recognized the usefulness of strengthening energy cooperation and agreed to consider opportunities to exchange views on the global and regional energy situation and energy policies, with a special focus on the opportunities offered by natural gas.

7. The five leaders discussed various challenges regarding the United Nations (UN) and their agencies. They affirmed their readiness to strengthen cooperation in regional and international organizations, including the UN and, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

8. The V4 and the State of Israel emphasized that the developments in the Middle East and Northern Africa, especially the activities of ISIL/Da'esh and the conflict in Syria, Libya, Iraq and Yemen have considerable implication on the security situation of the international community as a whole, including Europe and the Middle East. All sides shared the view that it is necessary to strengthen global and regional efforts in countering terrorism.

9. They strongly and unequivocally condemned recent terrorist attacks, including those in Israel and across the world, and stressed that terrorism continues to be a troubling phenomenon of our times and represents a serious threat to international peace and security. The leaders agreed to exchange views on their efforts aimed at fighting terrorism and countering violent extremism and incitement. The five leaders agreed to explore the possibility of further strengthening joint cooperation in the areas of defense and defense industry, cyber security, hybrid threats, non-proliferation and information and know-how sharing.

10. The V4 and the State of Israel agreed that tackling the current migration crisis requires addressing its origins. The leaders shared the view that close cooperation with the states of origin and transit should be maintained. In this context, leaders of the V4 and the State of Israel emphasized the importance of diplomatic efforts aimed at peaceful and lasting conflict resolution and stabilization. They also discussed the need to foster good governance and sustainable economic growth in states of origin of economic migrants.

11. The V4 and the State of Israel discussed the Middle East Peace Process and reaffirmed the need for a solution based on mutual recognition and effective security arrangements. The leaders of the V4 reaffirmed their support for a viable two-state solution and the right of Israel to live in security and peaceful co-existence with all its neighbors, including Palestinians. They considered ways to help promote direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. The parties expressed their hope that

in the context of meaningful direct bilateral negotiations, all outstanding issues between the Israeli and Palestinian sides could be resolved. The leaders stressed their opposition to any attempt to undermine Israel's legitimacy.

12. The five leaders stressed their determination to promote cultural cooperation and people-to-people exchanges, with the aim to increase mutual understanding of their respective cultures and safeguard cultural diversity. They decided to seek ways to further promote the education of the historical and cultural heritage of the Jewish people and the State of Israel in Hungarian, Czech, Polish and Slovak languages and the education of the history and culture of the V4 Member States in the Israeli education system in respective schools and educational institutions.

13. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs, fulfilling their role as the major coordinators of the scope of issues discussed today, will continue to consult regularly in order to monitor and guide the progress of the undertaken projects as well as identifying eventual ways of expanding the political and economic cooperation.

The V4 and the State of Israel acknowledged the need to intensify their political dialogue and continue their high-level exchanges, providing that all these activities are of complementary nature to the bilateral cooperation. The Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group accepted the invitation of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the next V4+Israel summit meeting to be held in 2018 in the State of Israel.