Chair’s Communiqué - the meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Berlin Process

Warsaw, 11-12 April 2019

In the framework of the Berlin Process Presidency, the Republic of Poland welcomed in Warsaw on 11-12 April 2019 Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Berlin Process, the Presidency in the Council of the European Union, as well as representatives of the European Commission, the European External Action Service, and the Regional Youth Cooperation Office to discuss regional cooperation and the progress on outstanding bilateral issues.

The historic Prespa agreement is a milestone for the entire region. Best practices that made this achievement possible were shared by the Republic of North Macedonia and the Hellenic Republic. Experience from the negotiations of *Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations between Sofia and Skopje* were presented by the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Bulgaria.

Participants welcomed progress on regional cooperation and commended the signature of Regional Roaming Agreement at the Digital Summit in Belgrade as an achievement in regional cooperation that will bring benefits to citizens and businesses.

Participants welcomed the fact that the reporting procedure on bilateral issues was established by means of stocktaking seminars, which took place in Vienna and in Skopje, and that draft individual reports on progress regarding outstanding bilateral issues were submitted. Participants underlined the importance of this exercise. Working on further progress to be achieved before the Western Balkans Summit and updating the report to be submitted to the Leaders during the Western Balkans Summit, were named as key tasks before Poznań. Participants welcomed the offers to organize next stocktakes in Sarajevo and Pristina.

Participants recalled the three declarations signed by 14 Leaders at the Western Balkans Summit in London – *Joint Declaration on Regional Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations in the Framework of the Berlin Process*, *Joint Declaration on Missing Persons in the Framework of the Berlin Process*, and *Joint Declaration on War Crimes in the Framework of the Berlin Process* – and urged further progress in this area.

Participants unanimously reaffirmed their unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans and noted the role of the February 2018 Commission’s strategy and the flagship initiative “Supporting reconciliation and good neighbourly relations” in finding and implementing definitive, inclusive and binding solutions for bilateral disputes in the Western Balkans rooted in the legacy of the past.

They underlined their commitment to reconciliation and welcomed a briefing by the Commission on way ahead with regard to RECOM. Participants agreed that the region needs to renew its commitment to building a strong historical record resilient to revisionism. They discussed a possible approach to dealing with the past by the governments with the involvement of civil society and victim associations through the initiative for RECOM and have agreed to continue exploring this option.

Participants reiterated their determination to uphold the spirit of constructive regional cooperation of the Berlin Process, to avoid irritants in bilateral relations and to grasp the opportunity to create a new narrative about the region, turning the page of its difficult history.

At the dinner hosted by the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, on 11 April, participants discussed the situation of the youth based on presentation by the Regional Youth Cooperation Office. The importance of issues such as employment, education, entrepreneurship, culture, and the role of the youth cooperation in fostering good neighbourly relations were outlined. Participants agreed that creating opportunities for young people to thrive in the region should remain a golden thread of public policies and reforms across the board. They recognised that this requires bold structural reforms, good business climate, sound public governance and rule of law, a modern education system and close regional cooperation and integration. Participants welcomed the role of RYCO in the regional cooperation and reconciliation. They reaffirmed their strong support for RYCO and its further development.