

Joint statement of the EU Sherpas of V4 countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) and the Minister of State for European Affairs of France

28 November 2019

The V4 countries and France highlight the importance of this format to work together on common European priorities and to hold genuine exchanges of views on issues where our positions differ. Our discussions are rooted in the close ties between our countries and our shared ambition to build a strong and united Europe.

1- The V4 countries and France consider that the European Union must step up its efforts to fight climate change, with the goal of achieving carbon neutrality. They are looking forward to the discussion at the December European Council on the EU's long-term strategy on climate change. They agree to continue working on the conditions and the enabling framework to be put in place so as to ensure a **transition to a climate-neutral EU in line with the Paris agreement, that will be just and socially balanced, take account of Member States' national circumstances, respect the principle of technological neutrality and the right of Member States to decide on their own energy mix and preserve competitiveness of European industry.** In that context, it is necessary to provide adequate and additional funding at EU level and to leverage public and private investment. They support the idea of creating a Just transition fund. They are also open to discuss on the basis of a thorough impact assessment the creation of a **carbon inclusion mechanism** at the borders of the European Union to reduce carbon leakage, in a manner consistent with WTO rules. Technical work should be launched to explore different options with the view to coordinate positions.

2- In the context of the ongoing negotiations of the Multiannual Financial Framework, the V4 and France reaffirm that a strong, sovereign, safe and prosperous Europe requires adequate level of financing while rejecting the opposition between new challenges and existing Treaty-based policies with clear European added value, in particular the Common Agricultural Policy and the Cohesion Policy. They also consider that the way the budget is financed must be modernised and made consistent with our shared objectives. In particular, they agree **that the withdrawal of the United Kingdom offers a unique opportunity to remove all rebates and corrections as from 2021.**

3- The V4 and France reaffirm their unequivocal support to the European perspective of the Western Balkans. They recognise the reforms and the courageous acts of reconciliation undertaken in the Republic of North Macedonia and Albania. They are ready to examine a Commission's proposal with the aim of making the accession process faster, more efficient and more effective in providing concrete benefits for citizens in candidate countries, without prejudice to the ongoing accession negotiations. The V4 and France recall the commitment of the European Council to revert to the issue of enlargement before the EU-Western Balkans summit in Zagreb in May 2020.

4- The future of Europe is at the centre of our interest. Facing the unprecedented situation of United Kingdom leaving the European Union and the need to tackle new challenges such as climate change, digitalization, migration, social inequalities, defence and trade policy, we need to make sure the functioning of the Union is more effective and efficient. First and foremost, the Union has to act for of its citizens and bring added values for its businesses. **We support the initiative of the upcoming European Commission to strengthen the dialogue on Europe by establishing the Conference on the future of Europe.** We are convinced this dialogue should bring European citizens closer to the Union, closer to its core values. We stand ready to engage in the debate as well as to come with concrete topical proposals. We are convinced that the Conference on Europe will provide an opportunity to find common ground between all Member States, national parliaments, European institutions, civil society and European citizens.