

**INTERPARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE  
FOR THE COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY (CFSP) AND THE  
COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY (CSDP)**  
*Budapest, 9-10 September 2024*

**JOINT STATEMENT OF THE CO-CHAIRS**

*The 25th Interparliamentary Conference (IPC) for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) was held in the framework of the parliamentary dimension of the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The event was attended by members of national parliaments from the EU Member States and Members of the European Parliament, as well as members of national parliaments from the candidate and potential candidate countries of the EU and from the European member states of the NATO as observers and other distinguished guests as well. This statement contains the main reflections on the topics of the Interparliamentary Conference. The content of the document is non-binding.*

As Co-Chairs of the 25th Interparliamentary Conference:

**The enlargement of the EU and the future of Europe**

1. We note that Europe is facing extraordinary challenges caused by the combined effects following Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine in our neighbourhood, wider geopolitical challenges, including the deteriorating position of EU in global competition, a generalised fragile security situation, migration, climate change and demographic trends.
2. We reaffirm that enlargement policy remains the EU's most effective tool representing a geostrategic investment in peace, security, stability, democracy and economic development for the continent and the EU. We underline that EU membership is a key driver of transformation, enhancing our collective security and socio-economic prosperity.
3. We recall that the enlargement policy is the EU's most successful policy and that it continues to be a merit-based, balanced and credible process. We welcome the new impetus and progress in the accession process over the past year. The EU-Western Balkans Summit and the next meeting of the European Political Community will take place in autumn 2024, in order to further broaden and deepen cooperation.
4. We call on the EU to strengthen the credibility of the accession process based on objective criteria and merit, with fundamental values and principles at its core, while taking into account the EU's capacity to absorb new members. We note that only a merit-based enlargement policy can preserve the credibility of the enlargement process.

5. We recall the EU's long-standing commitment to the European perspective of the Western Balkans. We note that the integration of the region within the EU is beneficial for both sides in economic, security and geopolitical terms.
6. We welcome the recently launched EU accession negotiations with Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, and we encourage Georgia to make the necessary decisions for progress in the European integration process, in the firm belief that the steady integration of these countries into the EU represents a geostrategic and democratic opportunity and an investment in a united and strong Europe.
7. We recall that it is in the EU's interest to continue strengthening the EU-Türkiye relationship towards a closer, more dynamic and strategic partnership, which has significant potential.
8. We believe that the EU should accelerate the enlargement process in parallel with the institutional and decision-making reforms necessary to preserve its integration capacity and to ensure that the absence of these reforms does not delay the accession process of candidate countries. We call on the EU to maintain its credibility with the partners, who are at an advanced stage of accession negotiations.

### **The current foreign, security and defence policy challenges in the world**

9. We condemn the illegal Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and reaffirm our continued support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders and the unwavering commitment of the EU to providing support for as long as it takes.
10. We call for the EU and its Member States to work actively towards maintaining and achieving the broadest possible international support for Ukraine; in this respect, we support all genuine peace initiatives, including the Peace Formula presented by Ukraine's President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy.
11. We underline the importance of the European Peace Facility (EPF) and welcome the EU's Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM) for Ukraine as well as its adaptable approach to respond to the needs of the Ukrainian General Staff.
12. In order to achieve a fair and lasting peace, we consider it important to return to the negotiating table as soon as possible.
13. We urge the strengthening of European energy security and stress the need for international cooperation on food security issues, by way of response to the disruption to energy and food supplies caused by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

14. We condemn the terrorist attack by Hamas on 7 October 2023. We urge to ensure that such a brutal terrorist attack never happens again anywhere in the world. We stress that the escalation of the conflict into a regional war must be avoided by any means. We consider the protection of the civilian population a priority.
15. In order to avoid a humanitarian crisis, we underline that priority must be given to the safe delivery of aid to civilians in Gaza, ensuring that this aid does not fall into the hands of terrorist organisations. We call on all parties to respect the provisions of international humanitarian law, and to comply with UNSC resolution 2712 demanding the use of 'all available routes to and throughout the entire Gaza Strip' to facilitate aid delivery.
16. We call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire to address the looming risk of mass starvation in Gaza, and to immediately and unconditionally release all hostages, calling for the International Committee of the Red Cross to be given immediate access to all hostages being held in Gaza and to provide them with medical care. We further condemn the acceleration of the illegal settlement of Palestinian territory.
17. We are convinced that only political dialogue can bring a fair and lasting solution to the conflict. Peace can only be achieved and any statehood will only be functional, if it is reached through direct negotiations between the parties concerned.
18. We support the ongoing work by the EU Police and Rule of Law Mission for the occupied Palestinian territory (EUPOL COPPS) and the EU Border Assistance Mission (EU BAM) in Rafah in assisting with the Palestinian Authorities' security and justice sector reform and integrated border management.
19. We are very concerned about the latest developments in the Middle East and urge all parties to refrain from any further escalation. A regional conflict must be avoided at all costs. Support from reliable partners must be strengthened in the region and work must be done to counter destabilising actors.
20. We emphasise the EU's strategic interest in developing cooperative relations and a stable and secure environment in the Eastern Mediterranean.
21. We are convinced that the greatest strength of the EU lies in its unity in diversity, and in our view this is also the case in the area of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. We stand ready to discuss the issue of increasing the efficiency of decision-making in this area.

### **The protection of external borders and the instrumentalisation of migration**

22. We note that during this semester the Hungarian Presidency will pay particular attention to the external dimension of migration, such as effective cooperation with third countries concerned, increasing the efficiency of returns, and comprehensive solutions at EU-level in compliance with EU- and international law.

23. We are convinced that the security and prosperity of the EU is closely linked to the strength and stability of our borders, and we will therefore emphasise the need to increase the crisis resilience of the Schengen area. The proper functioning of the Schengen area is essential to preserve the EU's *acquis* of the four freedoms.
24. We draw attention to the fact that migration is impacted by a number of crises, including armed conflicts, climate change and economic crises, which are increasing the migratory pressure at the EU borders. These challenges require a common response by the Member States of the EU, and these must be also addressed by better protection of external borders and by addressing the root causes and drivers of irregular migration and forced displacement. We are committed to increasing cooperation with the countries of origin and transit in order to jointly manage and enhance the efficiency of return, readmission and reintegration.
25. We stress the importance of increasing EU border management capacities, which play a crucial role in protecting our external borders and should complement the substantive financial efforts of the Member States along the external borders of the EU.
26. We call for closer cooperation between the EU Member States in the exchange of information and in joint operations to prevent and combat more effectively migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings.
27. We consider it critically important for the protection of the external borders and for the stabilisation of the security of the EU to coordinate our joint efforts, to fully implement the Schengen Acquis, and in particular the Schengen Borders Code, as it is a way to ensure that the benefits of the free movement within the Schengen area are preserved, while ensuring the security of our citizens.

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