

Prague Process

4th Ministerial Conference of the Prague Process

Prague, 24-25 October 2022

Joint Declaration

Preamble

We, the Ministers and Representatives of the Prague Process Members (hereinafter: 'the Parties') responsible for migration and migration-related matters and the European Union, represented by the European Commission; in the presence of representatives of the European Union Agency for Asylum, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Joint Coordination Platform and the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (hereinafter: 'the Partners');

Gathered at the invitation of the Czech Republic under the auspices of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union, in Prague on 24-25 October 2022 within the framework of the Fourth Ministerial Conference "Migration Partnerships – Way forward in times of new challenges";

Recalling the principles and political commitments framed at the First Ministerial Conference on 'Building Migration Partnerships' held in Prague on 27 and 28 April 2009 and expressed in the "Building Migration Partnerships" Joint Declaration;

Further recalling the Ministerial Conference held in Poznań on 3 and 4 November 2011 and its outcome – the Prague Process Action Plan 2012-2016 – as well as the Ministerial Conference held in Bratislava on 19 and 20 September 2016 and its outcome – the Joint Declaration;

Welcoming the progress achieved by the Parties over the previous implementation period and their willingness to sustain cooperation within the Prague Process;

Deploring in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, as a gross violation of international law and the involvement of Belarus, as it is complicit in the aggression against Ukraine;

Expressing grave concern over the impact of the Russian aggression on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine also regarding numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees in need of humanitarian assistance;



Realizing the severe security, political, economic and social implications the Russian war against Ukraine and its manifold repercussions have on migration and mobility across the Prague Process region;

Deeply concerned about recent global security, health and socioeconomic developments with severe implications on migration and mobility for the Prague Process Parties and Partners, resulting in large-scale displacement of migrants and refugees and noting the need to build preparedness to address such challenges in the future;

Condemning the instrumentalisation of migration for political purposes and as a form of hybrid threat;

Inspired by previous achievements, *reaffirming* the joint commitment to strengthen cooperation and calling for sustainable partnerships to address migration and mobility-related challenges;

Promoting tailor-made, beneficial partnerships between Prague Process Parties and Partners and countries of origin while addressing shared challenges;

Highlighting the role of the EU Agencies, notably the European Union Agency for Asylum and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, and the role of international organizations in the implementation of the Prague Process;

In the light of the aforementioned, *emphasizing* the key role of regional processes on migration in achieving shared objectives and highlighting the need for a balanced approach taking into account regional specificities and differences, and also bearing in mind the importance of a whole-of-route approach, engaging the Parties and countries of origin on equal footing;

Guided by the consultations between the Parties and Partners while also taking into account the national competencies, *recognizing* the continuing validity and comprehensive nature of the previously identified six thematic areas:

1. Preventing and fighting irregular migration and migrant smuggling
2. Strengthening capacities in the area of asylum and international protection and expanding protection capacities in the region
3. Promoting readmission, voluntary return, and sustainable reintegration
4. Addressing legal migration and mobility with a special emphasis on labour migration
5. Promoting integration of legally residing migrants in their host societies
6. Making migration and mobility positive forces for development

Further considering the following horizontal issues permeating the thematic areas for cooperation:

1. Sharing of information, as applicable, know-how and good practices that allow for strengthening of migration and asylum systems and mutual approximation
2. Capacity-building measures
3. Promoting different modes of cooperation on the local, regional, and global level
4. Digitalization and use of modern technologies in related areas

In the light of the aforementioned, the Parties of the Prague Process agreed to:

Further cooperate in a good spirit to achieve the highest possible level of mutual joint benefits and avoid steps that could harm the cooperation.

Pursue common goals and address joint challenges, such as the Russian aggression against Ukraine resulting in large-scale displacement of millions of people, the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic, the instrumentalisation of migration, the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and all other pressing challenges of mutual concern in a coordinated manner.

Sustain the balanced work of the Prague Process within the framework of the six thematic areas emphasizing the operationalization of cooperation and strengthening the ability to respond to emerging challenges for the upcoming five-year period 2023-2027, as outlined in the Action Plan.

Maintain the Prague Process activities and expand on existing tools contributing to the operationalization of the overall policy objectives, particularly through the Training Academy and its e-learning Platform aiming to provide tailor-made targeted training to Prague Process representatives working in the areas of migration and asylum.

Further expand the capacities of the Migration Observatory for the purpose of collecting data and providing evidence-based, reliable and comprehensive analysis for the use of the Prague Process Parties and Partners, including through improved crisis preparedness and foresight.

Welcome the establishment of Migration Resource Centers in countries of origin to enhance current mechanisms to provide thorough information on the risks associated with illegal migration, empower migrants and refugees to avoid perilous journeys, assist with their pre-departure language and vocational training, prepare them for the effective channelling of remittances and contributions to development in their countries of origin and work with local public and non-governmental stakeholders on the sharing of best practices, as applicable.

Establish expert networks on priority areas that would provide an operational platform for information sharing, as applicable, on best practices and allow for inclusive expert-level discussions and communication among existing networks.

Regarding the need to adapt to the modern era, address digitalization that becomes a fundamental aspect of daily work of asylum, migration and other relevant services while building provisions of various online/digital services for migrants and refugees, also contributing to information awareness on the risks of illegal migration.

Foster closer coordination, and where possible cooperation, with other regional actors in the pursuit of common goals, including the EU agencies, to ensure complementarity of action and avoid duplication of capacity development efforts.

Ensure the possibilities for sufficient funding and engagement for the next implementation period of 2023-2027, taking into account the enormous challenges arising from the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the large-scale displacement of people, as well as the manifold political, security and socioeconomic repercussions of the conflict, while not losing sight of the volatile situation in Afghanistan and Syria, which may have considerable

implications for migration and mobility in their direct neighborhood, as well as, potentially, in other regions covered by the Prague Process.

Regularly monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Action Plan 2023-2027 at the annual senior officials' meetings.
