



III SUMMIT OF SOUTHERN EUROPEAN UNION COUNTRIES MADRID DECLARATION

Madrid, April 10 2017

Nota de prensa

1. We, the Heads of State or Government of Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain, have met in Madrid for the third Summit of the Southern European Union Countries on 10 April 2017.

Following the first Summit in Athens on 9 September 2016 and the second Summit in Lisbon on 28 January 2017, we have again met, this time in Madrid, to reaffirm our commitment to working together for a strong and united European Union. Together, we wish to reflect upon our shared project and contribute to the current debate concerning our shared future. We declare our commitment to continue this process at a new meeting in Cyprus.

2. We welcome the results of the Rome Summit of 25 March. From the Declaration signed in Rome, we underscore the steadfast defence of the Union's unity of action, its institutions, its common values—freedom, democracy, human rights, solidarity and the rule of law—and the endorsement of our system of social protection and welfare. We fully support the Rome Agenda contained in the Declaration, and its priorities: a safe and secure Europe; a prosperous and sustainable Europe; a social Europe; and a stronger Europe on the global scene. As stated in the Declaration, we reaffirm our commitment to working together within the European Council and among our institutions to implement the agenda.

3. As part of the debate on the future of the Union, the Commission's White Paper is a valuable contribution. We look forward to the presentation by the Commission of the reflection papers, as announced in the White Paper. These papers should contribute to the debate on the options that lie ahead of us as we move forward together in the process of integration.

4. We reaffirm the statement made by the European Council on 29 March 2017, after the United Kingdom gave notification of its intention to leave the Union. We regret the United Kingdom's decision, but respect its will. In view of the upcoming start of negotiations, we stress the importance of the common principles the 27 agreed in the Declarations of 29 June 2016 and of 15 December 2016. We reaffirm the importance of maintaining the



unity of the 27 and of preserving the interests of the European Union in the negotiations, which must be based on a phased approach. We restate our support and trust in the negotiator Michel Barnier. In the future, we hope to have the UK as a close partner of the EU.

5. In keeping with the Athens and Lisbon Declarations, we reaffirm the importance of strengthening cooperation across the Mediterranean basin and with African countries. We reaffirm that migration requires a comprehensive approach. This involves: strengthening dialogue and cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination of migration, especially with Mediterranean and African countries, in line with the principles of the Joint Valletta Action Plan, as well as with Asian countries; stepping up the fight against human traffickers and smugglers; fostering the readmission of irregular migrants; promoting a truly European return policy and the full operationalization of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX); reinforcing external border control, improving surveillance and taking advantage of new technological tools such as the Entry-Exit System and European Travel Information and Authorization System; and continuing to guarantee international protection for those who qualify for it.

EU Migration Policy must be based on shared responsibility and solidarity with those countries affected by migratory pressure due to their geographical location at the external borders of the Union, especially with regard to the ongoing reform of the Common European Asylum System. Currently, the Central Mediterranean route is under extreme migratory pressure, as reflected in the Declaration on the external aspects of migration adopted at the Malta Summit held in February; other migratory routes, such as those that run through the Eastern and Western Mediterranean also require our full attention. Indeed, the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean remains volatile, and the continued, full, sustained and non-discriminatory implementation of the 18 March 2016 EU-Turkey Statement is necessary.

6. We agree on the need to promote sustainable growth and employment and to preserve and further develop our social models of welfare state. Economic convergence among Member States deserves a new impetus. Fighting unemployment and, in particular, long term and youth unemployment is a political priority for us. The internal market and the euro are powerful tools for economic growth and social progress. We have to ensure that they work efficiently and that their benefits reach all citizens.

In the short term, in line with the Bratislava agenda, we reaffirm our commitment towards completing the single market, in particular in the energy and digital areas; promoting growth and investment; and fostering competitiveness. We reiterate our support to the Investment Plan for



Europe and the extension of the European Fund for Strategic Investment. We are also fully committed to an open and rules-based trade policy as free and fair trade is an essential driver for competitiveness, jobs and prosperity.

The social dimension of the European Union calls for citizens to remain at the centre of our integration project. For Europeans to take full advantage of the benefits of the single market, labour mobility should be enhanced, in a framework that ensures full respect of social and labour rights, and of national competences. To promote upward social convergence, options can be explored for enhanced coordination of education and social security systems and for improvements in the portability of social benefits and entitlements. A European pillar of social rights, based on the European social and labor acquis, could be a contribution to this end. Properly functioning national labour markets with adequate levels of social protection and European cohesion policy play a central role to reduce inequalities and poverty and to foster social inclusion, in particular through employment creation. In addition, further investments in education and vocational training are essential to reduce the risk of unemployment and to prepare European workers for the challenges of the future, in particular through skills development, especially digital skills.

Furthermore, decisive progress should be made on the completion of the Economic and Monetary Union, in line with the Rome Declaration. We call on the swift completion of the Banking Union, including by the creation of a European Deposit Insurance System. Economic policy coordination should foster convergence, in the long term, proceeding towards further integration, in particular fiscal integration whilst ensuring full respect of national competences, which is also important for an efficient development of the social dimension of the European Union.

7. The security of our citizens is our main priority and depends to a large extent on peace and stability beyond our borders. Cooperation among Law Enforcement Authorities is crucial both between European Union countries and, where appropriate, with third States, particularly those in our immediate neighbourhood. We welcome the immediate entering into force of a set of new European Union rules that contribute to this goal, such as the new Directive on Terrorism, the Fire Arms Directive, and the reform of the Schengen Borders Code, which extends systematic checks also to European citizens crossing external borders.

It is imperative to reinforce measures to stem the financing of terrorism and disrupt the revenue stream towards terrorist groups. Our countries have been calling for a strengthened international framework to combat the unlawful destruction of cultural heritage, religious sites and artefacts, and the smuggling of cultural property by terrorist groups during armed



conflict. We welcome the recent adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2347(2017) in this respect.

Efforts to prevent radicalization should be strengthened. At the same time, more and urgent attention should be paid to the issue of foreign terrorist fighters, especially returnees. EU measures to combat the financing of terrorism and to prevent radicalization should be reinforced. Victims of terrorism deserve special attention from the EU.

In this context, we firmly condemn the recent terrorist attacks in Russia, Sweden and Egypt and express our solidarity with their people.

8. We want the EU to become a real security and defence provider, a credible force to counter our security challenges. In this regard, we express our commitment to fully implement the European Council conclusions of 15 December 2016 and the conclusions by the President of the European Council of 9 March 2017, enhancing the EU's strategic autonomy and its capacity to act, becoming more involved in the protection of Europe and its citizens, sharing more responsibilities with NATO, in full respect of the decision-making autonomy of both organisations, and reinforcing cooperation to enhance the effectiveness of the CSDP and the development of Member States' defence capabilities, supported by the establishment of a European Defence Fund. Moreover, economic stability, growth and convergence stemming from EMU reform might also contribute to the strengthening of European defence capabilities. We are convinced that increasing Europe's resilience and advancing towards a real defence cooperation and common security will allow Europe to better contribute to peace and stability in its neighbourhood and beyond, particularly in the Mediterranean and Africa, including by deepening its support in the area of capacity building for security and development.

9. We believe that the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) plays a central role in the consolidation of Euro-Mediterranean regional cooperation, as an expression of co-ownership in the management of our common regional agenda in order to effectively and collectively address our current challenges. Moreover, the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy highlighted the EU's political will to further strengthen the UfM. We welcome the success of the Second Regional Forum, held in Barcelona in January, and maintain our support for the UfM and for the Secretary-General.

10. We closely follow and we reiterate our support to the process for the reunification of Cyprus, without guarantees, in line with UNSC Resolutions and the EU acquis. We recall that the Republic of Cyprus is and will remain a member of our Union after the settlement, and that EU membership is the best safeguard for a reunified Cyprus.



11. The Southern European Union countries condemn in the strongest terms the air strike with chemical weapons on April 4th in Idlib (Syria). The repeated use of chemical weapons in Syria, both by the Assad regime since 2013 and by Daesh constitute war crimes. All identified perpetrators must be held accountable for this violation of international law and should be sanctioned within the framework of the United Nations. The strike launched by the United States on Shayrat Airfield in Syria had the understandable intention to prevent and deter the spread and use of chemical weapons and was limited and focused on this objective. We will continue to support the efforts and the work of the OPCW and the UN with regard to the investigation of the use of chemical weapons. The Southern European Union countries reiterate that there can be no military solution to the conflict in Syria. Only a credible political solution, as defined in UNSCR 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué, will ensure peace and stability in Syria and enable a decisive defeat of Daesh and other UN-designated terrorist groups in Syria. We reiterate our support to the UN-mediated intra-Syrian talks in Geneva to reach a political solution in Syria.

