

BENELUX – SLOVENIA JOINT DECLARATION

Ljubljana, 6 February 2018

1. The summit of the Benelux countries and Slovenia was held today in Ljubljana. Following our consultations in June and October 2017 in Brussels we agreed to cooperate closer, especially on the EU related issues. We thus decided to convene regular consultations among our government institutions at the senior official level.
2. We are determined to make a success of the European Union and we strongly believe that we can successfully address future challenges, building on our common values and achievements. We firmly believe that a united European Union is of the utmost essence in finding responses to our common challenges in the 21st century, especially if we want the Union to remain a source of prosperity and welfare to the benefit of our citizens.
3. The European Union is built on values, such as respect for freedom, democracy, human rights, solidarity, equality and the rule of law. We emphasize the shared responsibility of the institutions and member states to uphold and promote these values.
4. We need to build the European Union further to the benefit of our citizens and strengthen the EU's ability to protect and perform in a free and open world. The Union needs to advance ambitiously towards strengthening of the Economic and Monetary Union and completion of the Single Market and it needs to do more in areas such as social dimension, migration, security and climate action:
 - We need a robust EMU that delivers on stability, sustainability and growth, based on competitive, resilient and upwardly converging economies, and where the completion of the Banking Union is a priority.
 - At the same time, we call for strengthening of the European social dimension and underline the need for greater emphasis on the challenges our youth is facing and the opportunities they need.
 - We also reiterate our call for a deeper, fairer and more integrated Single Market, in particular in the field of digital services and digitalisation, with a stronger focus on research and innovation, investments in sustainable solutions, and a better environment for micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises as well as start-ups.

5. We need a future-oriented EU budget that meets the ambitions of the modern European Union and expectations of its citizens.
6. We are determined to ensure that the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union will cause the least possible impact to our citizens and businesses. We will continue to strive for a globally competitive European Union “post-Brexit” which will be a strong voice for free trade in the world.
7. In striving for a more globally competitive, innovative, sustainable and resilient European Union, we need to strongly embed the idea of the Circular Economy: a concept of key importance for the future of our society, economy and environment. In this respect, we propose the Circular Economy to be a topic for discussion at the European Council level this year.
8. We welcome the discussion in the framework of the Leaders’ Agenda and will engage actively and constructively to make a success of it as agreed in October 2017.