

JOINT STATEMENT

**of the 21st Meeting of the Ministers of Environment of the Visegrad Group Countries,
the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania**

30 September 2014, Bratislava, Slovakia

The Ministers of Environment of the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic and the State Secretaries of Hungary, the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania

REAFFIRMING the importance of the cooperation of the Visegrad Group countries, the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania in the field of environmental protection and climate policy,

BEARING in mind the previous meetings of the Environment Ministers of Visegrad Group countries and Visegrad Group countries together with the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania,

NOTING the Programme of the 2014/2015 Slovak Presidency of the Visegrad Group,
have agreed as follows:

Climate Change

2030 Framework for the EU's Climate and Energy Policy

The V4+ Ministers and State Secretaries took note of the conclusions of the most recent European Council regarding the post-2020 European policy framework for climate and energy. The V4+ countries emphasize that further progress is necessary before the final agreement is reached on the proposed targets and principles that reflects different regional needs and circumstances in a balanced way.

The V4+ countries note with disappointment that the European Commission did not prepare individual impact assessments as requested by European Council in March. The Ministers and State Secretaries reiterate that the single greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction target at EU level must be set realistically and in a technology neutral way. The introduction of any legally binding renewable energy and energy efficiency targets at EU or national level is not desirable, in particular in the context of the proposal for the new governance system. Moreover, the V4+ countries share the common view that the final agreement on the policy framework is conditioned by fair effort sharing and solidarity mechanism in both ETS and non-ETS sectors among the Member States based on the current distribution criteria reflecting 2020 package ambition levels, in particularly in non-ETS.

Furthermore V4+ is convinced that predictable, stable and efficient rules protecting industry against carbon leakage are also indispensable part of a future agreement. Besides that V4+ supports higher flexibility between ETS and non-ETS sectors and the banking AEAs after 2020. In addition, the V4+ Ministers and State Secretaries also declare that in addition to fair distribution of efforts in both ETS and non-ETS sectors an additional compensatory mechanism should be established enabling lower income Member States to finance modernization of their energy systems and industrial innovations. The V4+ countries also maintain their position that any decision on climate and energy policy must respect that it is the sovereign right of every Member State to freely choose its most suitable energy mix as provided in the Treaty

Finally, the V4+ agrees that the European Council should, on regular basis, review all important issues related to the 2030 climate and energy framework preparation and implementation, including possible impacts on competitiveness and energy prices.

The V4+ Ministers believe that the European Council should discuss and agree the EU position for the 2015 Paris climate conference. Following COP21 in Paris and considering contributions made there by other Parties and especially all major economies, the European Council should ensure that protective measures are in place addressing competitiveness of European industries, especially those in the risk of carbon leakage, in case of lack of comparable efforts by other Parties.

International Climate Negotiations

In respect of the preparations for the 20th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 20) to the UNFCCC and the 10th session of the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 10) in Lima, in December 2014 V4+ stresses the importance of the upcoming climate negotiations in Lima, in particular in terms of reaching an agreement on the key elements for the 2015-Agreement.

We perceive that clear, comparable and fair indicators are the key conditions for agreeing on INDCs. Focus should be given to those already existing in order to avoid additional administrative burden which may occur in case of defining some new indicators.

We believe that Parties need to achieve substantial progress to be able to adopt the new global climate regime at COP 21 in Paris 2015. The V4+ expects the following outcomes from the Lima conference: agreeing up front information requirements applicable to intended nationally determined contribution (INDCs) of all Parties which will ensure that these contributions are quantifiable, transparent and comparable; adopting a decision on modalities of the ex-ante consultation; identifying the elements of the 2015 agreement and in this context bringing further clarity on how adaptation and finance will be addressed in the agreement so as to not confuse the notion of INDCs with centrality of elements other than mitigation.

The V4+ expects all major economies to present their INDCs by the first quarter of 2015 to complete the consultation phase without delay and to enable reaching the agreement at COP 21.

Furthermore, the Ministers and State Secretaries of the V4+ countries welcomed the outcome of the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon Climate Summit held on 23 September 2014 and welcomed momentum created. Ministers expressed hope that the attention summit had risen among civil society would create enough pressure for negotiators to speed up the process so that in Paris new and ambitious deal could be agreed. They also expressed the need for global cooperation to fight the negative effects of climate change.

Clean Air Package

The Ministers and State Secretaries expressed their support for the Clean Air package designed to further reduction of air pollution. Nevertheless, they reiterate that the proposed level of reduction of selected pollutants is too ambitious and its implementation would be economically challenging in our regional conditions and national circumstances. On that account, the V4+ countries shall act jointly to promote more acceptable levels for the reduction commitments for 2030 which will allow to comply with targets by the economic sectors concerned and that better reflect the national emission projections of each country. This could be achieved by overall decrease of ambition level or by setting only indicative targets for 2030 at this moment or by additional flexibility mechanism.

With respect to Proposal for Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the limitation of emissions of certain pollutants into the air from medium combustion plants the member states concerned are willing to achieve common position to emission limit values for SO₂, NO_x and Particulate Matter according to the different types of plants and fuels used. This joint statement shall take into account social and economic conditions.

Circular Economy - Waste Package

The V4+ countries took note of the recent Communication from the European Commission Towards the Circular Economy and the Waste Package proposal. The Ministers and State Secretaries agreed that the prevention of waste generation is one of the key elements from the side of the resource efficiency approach. However, V4+ countries also emphasize the need for further discussion about more flexible settings of the Waste Package taking into account the different base lines of EU MS.

Although, moving closer to the Circular Economy is broader than a waste management issue that requires harmonised efforts in the fields ranging from product design to the price of primary and secondary materials, as well as the practical feasibility aspects of extended producer responsibility. Furthermore the proposed recycling targets for different types of waste and restrictions on municipal waste landfilling are overly ambitious, without a

sufficient cost-benefit analysis and omitting the current situation in waste management within the individual countries. Hence, V4+ countries promote either the extended time-frame for achieving the proposed targets or setting them in a more realistic way according to individual countries' specifications.

Done in Bratislava, Slovakia on 30 September 2014

For the Czech Republic

His Excellency *Mr. Jan Kříž*

Deputy Minister of the Ministry of the Environment

For Hungary

His Excellency *Mr. Zsolt SZABÓ*

Secretary of State of the Ministry of National Development

For the Republic of Poland

His Excellency *Mr. Marcin KOROLEC*

Secretary of State of the Ministry of Environment

For the Slovak Republic

His Excellency *Mr. Peter ŽIGA*

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For the Republic of Bulgaria

Her Excellency *Mrs. Svetlana ZHEKOVA*

Minister of Environment and Water

For Romania

His Excellency *Mr. Mihail FÂCĂ*

Secretary of State of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change