

DECLARATION

On Return to Normal Life, i.e. Its Restoration

Aware of the responsibility for overcoming the burdensome experiences of the recent past and reestablishing mutual trust and understanding,

Noting the need to take active participation in assisting the democratically elected governments with attaining what the majority of their constituents wants,

Considering not only the need but the inevitability of the integration - through the acceptance of certain standards of conduct and action - into the world of developed democracies,

Desiring to provide a concrete incentive and contribution to all efforts for accelerated and complete normalization of the situation in the Western Balkans,

Civil society organizations (W6) present, at their meetings on April 27th 2017 in Tirana and June 27th 2017 (the Igman Initiative) in Podgorica, to the participants of the Summit of the Berlin Process (July 12th 2017 in Trieste) the Declaration on Return to Normal Life, i.e. Its Restoration,

And in the hope and belief that the participants of the aforementioned Summit will recognize the essence of the Declaration's content, as well as the intent of its advocates, in the context of restoring a normal and stable life in the Western Balkans, and that they will accept the Declaration as one of the official documents of the Summit,

Conclude, propose and consider necessary the following:

Cross-border mobility in the region of the Western Balkans is still unsatisfactory and is inconsistent with what has been

proclaimed as one of the fundamental objectives of the European Union. Although significant improvements have been made in this area in the past two decades, the remaining barriers to complete freedom of movement must be systematically removed, including the principle of reciprocity between the countries that maintained their visa regime, and full freedom of movement of the workforce, which implies mutual recognition of higher education diplomas.

It is necessary not only to declare the willingness to do so, but to actively work on attaining better mutual understanding, which implies suppressing stereotypes and prejudices towards particular nationalities in the most compelling way, while at the same time striving for unburdened dealing with the past - both one's own and that of other countries in the region. The purpose of education, from kindergarten to college, is not only to develop "finished products" for the labor market, but to encourage critical thinking and judgment, to avoid further prisoners of any ideology.

The governments should pay special attention to the status of youth, and through tangible actions open possibilities for their life in the future, so as to - without restricting their freedom of movement or limiting their freedom of choice and decision making - diminish the brain drain, which is one of the consequences of the wars at the end of the 20th century and unsatisfactory conditions in the economy; mutual contacts of the members of younger generations, with an underlying substance and free from a mythological approach to history, are the only guarantee that the region will not slide back into the past.

We can no longer be satisfied when the countries declare that they have established the rule of law, even when the EU confirms such an optimistic appraisal, because everyday practice shows us that we are all - although at different stages and despite adopted legislation - far from having laws apply equally to everyone, ubiquitously and at all times; selective enforcement of laws is almost an everyday practice, and until it is eradicated we

will not have legitimate countries. It is precisely in this area that the governments could receive significant assistance both from the EU and civil sector. However, there must be readiness not only to accept this assistance but also ask for it if needed.

It is extremely important to uncompromisingly lead the fight against corruption which has, at different levels, spread across the countries of the region, and has in most cases reached the highest levels of the governments. This fact should be acknowledged and all further actions must stem from it. Otherwise we will not move away from statements that sound good but behind which there is nothing except a conscious or unconscious desire to distort the reality of things.

The countries of the Western Balkans should be open towards foreign investors and capital (which necessitates the removal of the existing administrative barriers), while being cautious about both the entry of exclusively speculative capital and the banking system becoming an end in itself instead of serving citizens. The economic opening to the world, as inevitable and necessary as it is, cannot be in the function of turning a country into the market for a low quality products coming from the developed world, and even less in the function of turning it into a pool of cheap workforce who are willing to leave it for that world. On the other hand, the successful investments contributing to the improvement of domestic economy and the opening of new workplaces should be emphasized as examples of good practice.

In view of objectively deteriorating relations between the countries of the region, it is extremely important to overcome this retrograde process, and for all countries in question to confirm, unconditionally and undeniably, from the top government structures to the civil sector, their commitment to overcoming the "debts" from the recent past and establishing relations of trust and mutual understanding. Within that context, we must put an end - above all in the media and in the area of education - to the

emerging wave of historical revisionism, which is headed towards the “rewriting” of the World War II history and extremely one-sided, biased and often false portrayal of certain aspects of the wars during which the Yugoslav Federation dissolved.

All countries of the Western Balkans must commit to resolving all remaining open issues (the legacy of the dissolution of Yugoslavia), as well as potential future disputes solely through negotiations, without threats and intimidation and in the spirit of international laws and good neighborly relations, with the standards and criteria of the European Union as a starting point. This process will be subject to constant monitoring and evaluation both at the national and international level. We call on the international community to support – politically, logistically and financially – all aspects of gradual normalization and stabilization of the state of affairs in the Western Balkans.

The civic and public sectors of the Western Balkan countries express readiness to uphold cooperation within the framework of the Berlin Process, anticipating that its potentials will provide indispensable assistance in enhancing cooperation and improving the overall situation in the region and in each of its countries .