

**JOINT STATEMENT
OF THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF THE VISEGRAD COUNTRIES
Budapest, 24 February 2014**

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad countries have discussed the recent developments in Ukraine.

First and foremost they welcome the fact that violence could be stopped as a result of the agreement reached by the sides on 21 February and express their condolences to the families of all those who were killed in the senseless bloodshed last week and throughout the conflict. They also welcome the election of the new Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada as an important step towards consolidation, as well as the release of Yulia Timoshenko, which finally addressed an important issue of selective justice long sought by the European Union.

Nevertheless, the situation remains volatile in the country. The Ministers reiterate their strong interest in maintaining the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine and call on all actors to refrain from any action that could undermine this. All Ukrainian political forces must continue to engage responsibly in a substantive dialogue to establish an inclusive national government that could restore law and order on the entire territory of the country. A sustainable and inclusive consolidation process must also include constitutional reform and preparation for free and fair elections, as well as the respect of European democratic values, including the rights of national, ethnic and linguistic minorities, as included in the relevant documents of the Council of Europe.

The Ministers fully support the efforts of High Representative Catherine Ashton regarding the contribution of the European Union to a lasting solution to the political crisis and the work of the European Commission to stabilise the economic situation in Ukraine. The stabilisation of the Ukrainian economy is a key aspect of the consolidation process: the international financial institutions must be able to provide much needed macroeconomic assistance to the country.

The Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad countries are ready to visit Ukraine to share their transitional experiences with the new inclusive government. The four countries are also ready to establish a coordination of humanitarian aid to Ukraine. The Ministers reiterate their strong support for Ukraine's European

perspective – based on the sovereign decision of the Ukrainian people – and remain committed to continue providing assistance in strengthening its relations with the European Union, including the signature of the AA/DCFTA, the country's reform process and modernisation. In the field of energy security, the Visegrad countries are ready to resume and develop the reverse flow of natural gas supplies to Ukraine. The share of Eastern Partnership allocations within the International Visegrad Fund is to be increased. Further steps are needed in the area of mobility: the Visegrad countries call for a speeding up of the visa-liberalisation process and for the increase in the number of scholarships available for Ukrainians in the Erasmus Plus programme.

Finally, the Ministers of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia pay homage to the Foreign Minister of Poland, Mr Radosław Sikorski, who was instrumental in brokering the deal, along with Ministers Steinmeier and Fabius, which managed to end the violence and contribute to the stabilisation of the country.