

**Joint statement of the Prime Ministers
of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia**

The Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia express deep concern about the dramatic development of events in Ukraine. We strongly condemn the cycle of violence which has already resulted in several fatalities. This cannot be justified by any reason.

The Visegrad Group countries, as neighbours of Ukraine, are convinced that the use of force cannot contribute to the resolution of political conflicts. A further escalation of the crisis endangers the future of Ukraine and threatens with a complete destabilization of the country. In this regard, we are also concerned about the role played by extremist groups in the events.

Therefore, we, the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group countries are convinced that all responsible Ukrainian stakeholders – including the authorities, the opposition and representatives of civil society – should be guided by their historical responsibility to preserve a stable, democratic and unified Ukraine. We call on all sides to stop immediately the spiral of violence. We call upon the authorities to respect the right of Ukrainians to peaceful assembly and to the freedom of expression. The cancellation of the laws passed on 16 January is a promising first step towards a possible compromise, which can contribute to finding a way out of this crisis.

We believe in the paramount importance of developing civil society, the mobility of students, independent media, as well as small and medium-sized enterprises. In this regard, introducing a visa-free regime with Ukraine as soon as possible has particular importance. We are ready to further mobilize the International Visegrad Fund to finance projects supporting development of civil society in Ukraine, facilitate people-to-people contacts and offer scholarships for Ukrainian students in V4 countries. We also call for the increase of the Erasmus+ Programme budget in order to expand the opportunity for Ukrainians to study in the EU from their current level of only a few dozen students.

Only a genuine and meaningful national dialogue can offer a way out of the crisis and pave the way for the rebuilding of trust and lead towards a stable, democratic and prosperous Ukraine.

Budapest, 29 January 2014