

Foreign Ministers' meeting of the Western Balkans Summit on the Berlin Process

Hillsborough Castle, Northern Ireland, 9 October 2025

Chair's Conclusions

1. On 9 October 2025, the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP, welcomed the Foreign Ministers of the Western Balkans Six (WB6) - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia - and their counterparts from Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany and Slovenia to Hillsborough Castle for the 2025 Foreign Ministers' Meeting of the Berlin Process.
2. Representatives from France, Greece, Italy, Poland, the European Union, the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) also participated in the meeting.
3. We were joined in our discussions by two rapporteurs from the 2025 Berlin Process Civil Society and Think Tank Forum, who addressed the themes of 'Reconciliation and Dealing with the Past' and 'Cybersecurity and Disinformation'. The policy recommendations from the Forum, held in Podgorica on 22-23 September, have been published.
4. Discussion was informal yet rich and based on a spirit of cooperation and partnership. The main conclusions of the meeting are summarised below.

A Europe whole and free

5. In this significant year of the 80th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the founding of the United Nations, the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and the 30th anniversary of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we reaffirmed our collective and individual commitments under these agreements and re-committed to a shared purpose of a **stable, secure and prosperous Western Balkans region** that is as vital as ever for collective European security today.
6. We deplored the return of war to the European continent as a result of **Russia's unprovoked aggression against Ukraine**. We recognised **the support being provided to Ukraine from across the Western Balkans region**, whether that be through military support and participation in the Coalition of the Willing, humanitarian support for the Ukrainian people, or collaboration to prevent sanctions circumvention.

Peace and reconciliation

7. Recognising the significance of Hillsborough as the location of the Foreign Ministers Meeting for **peace and reconciliation**, we heard valuable lessons from **Northern Ireland**, with important contributions from the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, Michelle O'Neill and Emma Little-Pengelly, Tánaiste Simon Harris of the Republic of Ireland, and UK Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP.
8. We welcomed the proposal to establish a Northern Ireland-WB6 Working Group to share good practice on inter-community relations, as well as dedicated UK funding to foster inclusive memorialisation through partnerships between UK cultural institutions and local grassroots initiatives across the region. We are grateful to the Northern Ireland authorities and all contributors for their engagement in the cause of peace.
9. We agreed the **Hillsborough Castle Declaration on Good Neighbourly Relations**, broadening and deepening the agreements on the same issues under Germany's chairmanship in 2024 and the last UK chairmanship of the Berlin Process in 2018.

Tackling irregular migration and other shared threats

10. We acknowledged the shared threats to our collective European security of **irregular migration, serious and organised crime, and organised immigration crime**. The only way to tackle these effectively is to work together and deepen our cooperation, which will be taken forward at the Interior Ministers' Meeting and Leaders' Summit.
11. We agreed that a whole of society approach to **cybersecurity resilience** was critical to countering hostile threats and contributing to regional stability. We agreed we are most effective when we work together, cooperating and sharing information to address common challenges. We expressed our support for the **Western Balkans Cyber Capacity Centre in Podgorica** and the excellent training it offers, building sustainable expertise in a co-owned format that deals directly with Western Balkan needs. Several participants highlighted their governments' plans to increase participation.
12. We also welcomed the establishment by the WB6 of a **Western Balkans Cyber Diplomacy network** as an important step to enhance tools and skills in the region.

13. We recognised the threat posed by **Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI)** as a critical national security issue requiring a national and regional response. We discussed the critical role of a pluralistic media, and the need for support for media literacy, education and effective regulation.
14. Recognising the specific challenges that FIMI can pose to stability, we proposed joint **technical talks** on the extent of the challenge and possible solutions, to be organised in the coming months.

Women, Peace and Security

15. We welcomed the **integration of gender equality** throughout this year's Berlin Process agenda: gender equality is a key indicator of stable, secure and prosperous societies.
16. In the 25th year of the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, we affirmed the perspective, rights and role of women in relation to peace and security. Evidence demonstrates that peace processes involving women are more likely to lead to longer-lasting agreements, and that cognitive diversity within security institutions supports better decision-making. We welcomed the launch of a bespoke **Human Security Defence Course by the UK's Ministry of Defence**, which will support delegates to explore human security conflict drivers and incorporate these into operations.
17. We agreed that threats to women's and girls' rights, and the ability to engage in civic life, undermine our collective security. We discussed how new technologies are being co-opted and manipulated to perpetrate harm and spread disinformation. Mounting a more effective, regional response to tackle online harm is vital to creating more stable and secure democracies where everyone's voice can be heard. We welcomed the commitment from Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia to join the **Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse**, shaping global and regional policy norms, demonstrating leadership on gender equality and digital safety, and advancing international commitments. We also noted the launch of **STOP Non-Consensual Intimate Images (NCII)**, giving women across the Western Balkans the power to remove images that may be used to silence and shame them.
18. WB6 Foreign Ministers committed to dismantling the barriers to women's meaningful participation in political and civic life and agreed to launch a regional network for **Women in Diplomacy** to advance regional cooperation and demonstrate a shared commitment to gender equality as a fundamental pillar

of modern, effective and inclusive diplomacy, with the inaugural meeting to be hosted in Sarajevo at the end of October.

19. To further support this issue, the WB6 approved a decision that **15% of funds through the Western Balkans Fund will now be earmarked for initiatives on gender equality**. This demonstrates the region's ongoing commitment to gender equality issues and fulfils a key recommendation of the 2024 Berlin Process Gender Equality Forum.

Regional and European integration

20. We underlined the importance of **sustained and visible progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration for all WB6 countries in the EU accession process** in line with the democratic will of WB6 citizens.
21. We commended the **continued efforts of regional organisations**, including the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) Secretariat, regional Chambers of Commerce and other non-governmental organisations, to identify and drive forward new areas of opportunity for regional integration through the Berlin Process, working collaboratively with WB6 Governments and other partners. The UK announced that it would join the RCC Board, as a further commitment of support to the region beyond its 2025 chairmanship of the Berlin Process.

Creative industries

22. We welcomed the adoption by WB6 Culture Ministers of a **Joint Declaration on the Creative Economy in Podgorica** on 28 May, which provided recognition of the creative economy as a key driver of economic growth, innovation and social cohesion and hence as a strategic sector. We celebrated the launch of 10 new partnerships between UK and Western Balkans institutions as part of a £500,000/€575,000 fund to share expertise and promote creative sector development. The British Council will also launch a **new Next Generation Skills Academy** with partners in the Western Balkans to increase youth employment and regional co-operation in Film/VFX and game development.

Chair's Closing Remarks

23. I want to express my deep appreciation to all Berlin Process participants for the constructive spirit and partnership with which they have approached a discussions at Hillsborough Castle. The Hillsborough Castle Declaration on Good Neighbourly Relations is a powerful demonstration of the collective commitment from all Berlin Process members to work together for our collective security, stability and growth.