



## **Joint Declaration of the Ninth Summit of the Three Seas Initiative**

Vilnius, Lithuania, 11 April 2024

1. We, the Presidents and high-level representatives of 13 Member States of the European Union, the participating states – the Republic of Austria, the Republic of Bulgaria, the Republic of Croatia, the Czech Republic, the Republic of Estonia, the Hellenic Republic, Hungary, the Republic of Latvia, the Republic of Lithuania, the Republic of Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, the Republic of Slovenia – of the Three Seas Initiative (3SI), met in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 11 April 2024 on the occasion of the Ninth 3SI Summit and the Sixth 3SI Business Forum.
2. We welcome the developments highlighted in the previous summits in Dubrovnik (2016), Warsaw (2017), Bucharest (2018), Ljubljana (2019), Tallinn (2020), Sofia (2021), Riga (2022), and Bucharest (2023) and reconfirm our continued strong commitment to the 3SI fundamental goals to strengthen regional cooperation for a resilient Europe and a stronger transatlantic partnership.
3. We emphasize the necessity of further consolidation of the 3SI to facilitate the continuity of activities, visibility of the 3SI and strengthening its inter-governmental cooperation. We also underline the need for assisting the integration efforts of the 3SI associated participating states – Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, which will start EU accession negotiations – and expanding cooperation with the 3SI strategic partners – the United States of America, the Federal Republic of Germany and the European Commission. In this regard, we are very pleased to welcome Japan as the 4th strategic partner of the 3SI. Japan's continuous engagement with the 3SI significantly contributes to achieving the goals of the Initiative and strengthens its connections to global supply chains and the Indo-Pacific region in particular. We welcome the growing interest of third countries to collaborate with the 3SI and look forward to building global partnerships for closer engagement with like-minded countries.
4. We acknowledge the geostrategic importance of the 3SI participating states in Europe and the potential of the 3SI as a beneficial coordination platform of strategic interests of the region. We commit to strengthening the role and visibility of the 3SI, including vis-à-vis EU Member States who are not members of the 3SI.
5. We stress the importance of enhancing the transatlantic partnership with the United States of America and underline that the 3SI serves as an important catalyst for the strategic presence of the US in the 3SI region, thus substantially contributing to Europe's security and economic prosperity.
6. We continue to resolutely condemn Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war against Ukraine and its people. We reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine, its sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We reiterate that Russia must immediately and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and encourage to establish a future compensation mechanism for all the destruction and injuries caused.

7. We remain determined to further increase pressure on Russia, including by strengthening sanctions and their full and effective implementation, to end its war of aggression. To this end, we also commit to collaborate closely to ensure full compliance and to counter sanctions circumvention. Russia and its leadership must be held fully accountable for waging a war of aggression against Ukraine and for other most serious crimes under international law, as well as for the massive damage caused by its war.

8. We reiterate our common position that the 3SI can play an important role in Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction with due consideration of all the efforts at the EU and international level, especially in close cooperation through the Multi-Agency Donor Coordination Platform. In this regard, we welcome the launch of the dedicated International Transport Forum at the OECD (ITF) Common Interests Group for Ukraine (CIG4U) as a way for practical cooperation on Ukraine's transport reconstruction and encourage all interested countries to join the group. At the same time, we stress that strengthening transport and logistics infrastructure in the 3SI region is key to planning and executing the due reconstruction process in Ukraine.

9. We acknowledge the efforts of the Republic of Moldova in withstanding increasing threats and we denounce the systematic hybrid pressures the Republic of Moldova is faced with in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, including attempts to undermine the constitutional order.

10. We attach great importance to the EU enlargement, both when it comes to the Western Balkans and Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia. From a strategic perspective, the EU enlargement will bring more stability and prosperity for the entire Union. The reforms implemented by the candidates and aspirants will determine the speed of the enlargement process which must remain merit-based. We urge these partners to uphold European values, including through their move towards full alignment with the EU CFSP, particularly the EU restrictive measures. We acknowledge the 3SI's potential to contribute to the EU's cooperation with them, aimed at bringing them closer to the EU through the implementation of the 3SI regional infrastructure projects and accelerating the green and digital transition.

11. We welcome the decision of the European Council to open EU accession negotiations with Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova and the steps taken by the associated participating states of the 3SI – Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova – towards their integration with the EU, which is a merit-based process. We express our strong support for their European path to start accession negotiations with these States without delay on the basis of the European Commission's reports, and stand ready to assist their efforts, including through joint undertakings within the 3SI. We remain committed to facilitating their infrastructural integration into the 3SI region and the Trans-European Transport, Energy and Digital Networks and developing new, resilient, and sustainable energy, transport, and digital links for increased regional connectivity.

12. We welcome the high-level participation in the Vilnius 3SI Summit by strategic partners to the 3SI – the United States of America, the Federal Republic of Germany, the European Commission, and Japan; associated participating states to the 3SI – Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova; and like-minded guests of the Vilnius 3SI Summit from Montenegro, the State of Israel, the Republic of Türkiye, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Finland, the Kingdom of Spain.

13. Representing one of the most industrialized, fastest growing and technologically advanced regions globally, playing an increasingly important role in the diversification of global value chains, we highlight the role of the 3SI in ensuring the EU economic security, resilience and competitiveness. In this context, we commit to strengthening and deepening the EU Single Market, implementing the European Economic Security Strategy and developing critical climate neutral and digital technologies in line with the EU industrial policies, inter alia the Net-Zero Industry Act.

14. In the context of Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war against Ukraine, we highlight the urgency and strategic importance of accelerating 3SI efforts in building resilient infrastructure and enhancing connectivity, in particular on the North-South axis, to contribute to greater convergence within the EU, redirection of transportation routes and supply chains, and the strengthening of overall 3SI security and prosperity.

15. Recognizing the role of the 3SI as part of wider European and global efforts of democratic countries to promote market-driven and values-based investments into trusted connectivity regionally and globally, we emphasize the importance of exploring synergies between the 3SI and such connectivity initiatives as the EU's Global Gateway, as well as those of the G7 and other like-minded partners. The 3SI offers natural links to the EU's neighborhood and serves as an extension of European connectivity to global transport routes, such as the Trans-Caspian Corridor and the IMEC (India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor).

16. We commend the results achieved by the current 3SI Investment Fund (3SIIF) and its contribution to facilitating economic growth and connectivity through strategic investments. We also welcome the establishment of a dedicated working group tasked with laying the groundwork for the successor to the existing 3SIIF. The continuation of this initiative underscores our commitment to fostering infrastructure development and sustainable economic prosperity across the 3SI region. Furthermore, we note the progress made in developing the 3SI Innovation Fund in collaboration with the European Investment Fund (EIF), with a perspective to provide capital to startups and scale-ups across the 3SI region, bridging the funding gap in financing innovations, thus increasing competitiveness of 3SI businesses. With progress already underway, we are confident that these initiatives will further strengthen our collective efforts in unlocking the potential of the 3SI.

17. Acknowledging the economic nature of the Initiative and the vital role of the private sector and financial institutions in attaining the 3SI goals, we emphasize the significant and counter-cyclical role of public development banks in mobilizing private capital to cover financing gaps for infrastructure projects. In this context, we encourage cooperation among the public and private development banks of 3SI countries and other existing international financial institutions.

18. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening the region's cyber resilience and cybersecurity, particularly through the further enhancement of cooperation in the field of cybersecurity of critical infrastructure. In this context, we welcome the initiative to build a network of existing multi-country collaboration platform(s) for increased practical coordination, information and know-how exchange among our countries, partners and the private sector in the field of cybersecurity, in synergy with EU structures and networks. We encourage 3SI cybersecurity stakeholders to actively engage in helping the partners from Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova to prioritize their cybersecurity needs and meet them.

19. We reaffirm that strengthening the resilience of dual-use infrastructure in the region for enhanced civilian and military mobility along the North-South axis, in line with the EU Action Plan on Military Mobility 2.0, represents a political goal as well as a responsible investment in our secure future and contributes to the reinforcement of the Eastern flank of NATO. In this context, we welcome the development of military mobility plans across the 3SI region, including a focus on the dual-use nature and civilian dimension of infrastructure development.

20. We recognize the urgent need to mobilize resources required for a socially just and environmentally sustainable transition towards a climate neutral and resilient economy, including green infrastructure, in the 3SI region, particularly through the enhancement of cooperation in the field of availability and promotion of green finance in accordance with European standards. In this context, we welcome the initiative to build an informal multi-country network for increased practical coordination and information exchange among our countries, partners and the private sector in this field. This should be done by leveraging existing green finance coordination mechanisms and in close coordination with international financial institutions.

21. We take note of the Projects Progress Report 2024, highlighting connectivity priorities of the 3SI countries in the three key areas of transport, energy and digital, as well as the advancement of priority projects, reaching a total of 143 in 2024. We welcome the addition of priority infrastructure projects from Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova to the aggregate list of 3SI Priority Projects.

22. Acknowledging the current, multiple geopolitical challenges in the wider 3SI region, as well as financial limitations, we call for intensifying efforts to implement the 3SI Priority Projects by streamlining the use of EU, national, international organizations, and other funds. We also underline the need to highlight those projects that have the widest regional reach. The establishment of a list of infrastructure projects, based on the principle of public-private partnership, would also be instrumental for potential investors.

23. We welcome the 6th Edition of the 3SI Business Forum, focusing on the 3SI region's resilience and smart growth, which is key in supporting the 3SI political goals. The high array of the multinational business forum community, reaching 1000 participants, clearly demonstrates the ever growing mutual interest to increase cooperation in the development of green technologies, energy security, digital infrastructure, cyber security, smart connectivity, financial solutions within the 3SI region, and the role of business in Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction. This interaction has been supported by the business-to-business (B2B) platform to facilitate direct business contacts and opportunities, and by over 20 side events involving businesses, science communities and society organizations, giving rise to a rich and vibrant ecosystem development of the 3SI.

24. We welcome the high-level conference on Ukraine, held by the ITF, in the margins of the 3SI Summit under the Chairmanship of the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania.

25. We welcome the commitment of the Republic of Poland to host the next 3SI Summit and Business Forum in 2025 and of the Republic of Croatia to host the Summit and Business Forum in 2026.