CONCLUSIONS

OF THE WESTERN BALKANS DIGITAL SUMMIT 2020, TIRANA

Western Balkan economies share the same objectives and goals in the field of digital transformation, anchored by the EU Digital Single Market principles and best practices and inspired by values of solidarity, inclusiveness and togetherness.

The Zagreb Declaration (May 6th, 2020) reaffirmed the unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans (WB) as well as support to the inclusive regional cooperation to facilitate the economic recovery of the region, building on EU rules and standards and bringing the region and its companies closer to the EU Internal Market.

The Economic and Investment Plan recently announced by the European Commission aims to spur the long-term recovery of the WB, backed by a green and digital transition towards sustainable growth of the region. Digital agenda, being one of its flagships, represents an opportunity for Western Balkan economies and societies to contribute to a sustainable, climate-neutral and resource-efficient region.

Today, we proudly witnesses the benefits Regional Roaming Agreement (RRA) brought to Western Balkan citizens from the first day of its implementation, providing substantial roaming charges reduction for all services. The Western Balkans ICT Ministerial Meeting held on the first anniversary of RRA implementation reconfirmed the commitment and dedication of Western Balkan economies to introduce roaming free region by July 1st, 2021.

Convened in Tirana for its 3rd edition, Digital Summit proves to be a successful flagship event in furthering regional efforts in digitalisation, embarking with courage and maturity on challenging reforms by learning from the successes of the past and building on the ambitions of the future. This year the Digital Summit is organised back-to-back with the Western Balkan Sofia Summit, part of Berlin Process, and marks new achievements while carefully addressing the challenges by the current pandemic related crisis.

The forthcoming agenda of regional integration 2021-2024 puts forward ambitious regional measures to expedite digital transformation and increase convergence with EU Digital Single Market, representing yet another remarkable example of mutual benefits.

Gathered in Tirana for the Digital Summit, we have agreed on the following:

● Reiterating the importance of an accelerated digital transformation in the Western Balkans in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and commit to deepen our cooperation and embark on new regional initiatives aimed at broadening the scope and ambition of our joint actions.

● Reaffirming the achievements of RRA implementation and commit to introduce roaming free region by the 1st of July 2021 as well as intensify the work with European Commission to finalise the roadmap on **EU-WB roaming charges reduction** by the next Digital Summit through an open, transparent, inclusive and reliable process.

- Taking note with great satisfaction of the increased uptake in the **Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF)**. We will make best efforts to further upgrade broadband infrastructure in the region maximising the use of WBIF funds, with particular focus on **ultra-fast connectivity**, as well as white areas. We are committed to strengthen capacities of **Broadband Competence Offices** including through greater integration in EU BCO network to respond to the challenges of digital connectivity.

- Welcome the signing of the **Memorandum of Understanding on 5G Roadmap for Digital Transformation in Western Balkans region** and commit to work on its efficient implementation. We are fully committed to provide timely access to 5G radio-frequency bands and deploy **5G networks** to ensure appropriate coverage and affordable services allowing all citizens of Western Balkans to reap the benefits of digital society in a cost-effective manner. We will make our best efforts to harmonise regional measures in order to ensure cybersecurity of 5G networks by implementing **EU toolbox on 5G cybersecurity**.

- Acknowledging the importance of **digital skills** in the new era of digitalisation and will make our best efforts to efficiently address market needs for digital skills as an incentive towards better digital literacy of the workforce. We commit to undertake concrete actions to support **digital upskilling and reskilling** at all levels, from basic to advanced digital skills, and tackle skills shortages and mismatch based on the EU best practices. We commit to mirror the practice of EU in developing the **Digital Education Action Plan in our economies** in order to foster development of high-performing digital education ecosystem, and enhance digital skills and competences.

- Expressing the will to undertake concrete actions in the framework of regional interoperability and to advance in the process of recognition of trust services within the Western Balkans based on the EU standards in order to enable the exchange of information in secure and reliable manner, facilitate movement of services and reduce the costs for businesses and citizens. We welcome the signing of the **Memorandum of Understanding on Regional Interoperability and Trust Services** in Western Balkans region and commit to work on its efficient implementation.

- Emphasising on improving e-services, including e-Government, e-Procurement and e-Health and align further with **European Interoperability Framework.** We will make our best efforts in further development of **digital health programmes** in WB economies, in the light of lessons learnt from COVID-19 pandemic.

- Committed to undertake regional activities in order to connect **European High-Performance Computing (HPC)** with the WB region and for the inclusion of the region into the European High-Performance Computing Joint Undertaking (EuroHPC). With knowledge that HPC can be used in a large number of areas and bring benefit to the Western Balkan economies, we will make best efforts to accelerate project preparation for future HPC projects linking to EU initiatives on HPC in the Western Balkans through the use of WBIF funds.

- Acknowledging the importance of the **European Alliance on Industrial Data and Cloud**, which covers all aspects and benefits of cloud computing. We commit to undertake activities for further development of cloud computing in the Western Balkans, as well as to cooperate on developing the next generation of cloud computing in the region, following the EU example.

- Committed to undertake activities to improve exchange of standards, based on best practices and EU standards, and in order to ensure data and services interoperability for smart cities, we fully support establishment of **smart cities network across Western Balkan region.**

- Restating the importance of the **European Artificial Intelligence Alliance** and we commit to establish regional WG that will take all necessary actions to establish synergies with the EU in the field of AI.

- Recognising the potential of **Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs)** and their impact on digital transformation of SMEs in WB region, as well as on business processes for better use of digital technologies with increase of competitiveness among the companies. We fully encourage and support establishment of **Regional Network of DIHs**, which will contribute to the WB region having more competitive digital environment.

- Committed to make efforts to strengthen **cybersecurity** capacities in the region through improving deterrence, strengthening human and technical capabilities to deal with cyber threats and increasing cyber resilience. The focus will be also given to identifying and increasing protection of critical infrastructure and cooperation in cybersecurity area.

- Inviting the European Commission, the Regional Cooperation Council, and other international partners to continue supporting the implementation of this and new agenda, by means of political, financial and technical assistance.

- Congratulating Montenegro as the next Host of the Digital Summit and remain committed to duly implement all commitments specified herein and report progress at the next Digital Summit.

Tirana, on November 2nd, 2020.