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United Kingdom - Belgium Joint Declaration on Bilateral Cooperation

Prime Minister De Croo and Prime Minister Johnson signed a joint declaration today expressing their intention to open a new chapter of deeper bilateral cooperation and partnership between Belgium and the United Kingdom.

1. The United Kingdom and Belgium are essential allies and close neighbours. Our partnership is based on shared values and outlook. As like-minded democracies, we are committed to working together as part of a wider global network of liberty to defend freedom and democracy, free trade, human rights, the rule of law and the international order. We will work together for the security of our citizens and of Europe as a whole. This Joint Declaration sets out our intent to open a new chapter of deeper bilateral cooperation and partnership.

I) Shared Prosperity

2. The strong trading relationship between our nations has brought shared prosperity and economic growth, and our supply chains are closely connected. We will make common efforts to strengthen our commercial ties, embedded in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, and the UK welcomes the upcoming Belgian economic mission scheduled for March 2022, led by Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid of Belgium, Representative of His Majesty.

3. We know that COVID-19 has challenged global supply-chains, and demonstrated the need to improve their resilience. We will play our part including through further work to facilitate efficient customs processes at the border for the movement of accompanied and unaccompanied goods and through the UK-Belgium Border Industry Facilitation Committee within our respective legal frameworks.

4. The UK and Belgium have thriving maritime sectors with world class ports that are vital to our economic growth and development. We agree to maintain and build on the close ties between our ports and welcome the recent mission of the ports of Antwerp and Zeebrugge to Edinburgh, Liverpool, Hull and London. We commit to ensure the smooth flow of traffic on the vital routes between the UK and Belgian ports, as well as through the rail connections between our two countries, and encourage our competent authorities to look for opportunities to enhance routes in a way that can grow trade and connectivity while contributing to our ambitious decarbonisation objectives. Following the Clydebank Declaration, we look forward to continued collaboration in support of green shipping corridors.

II) Green Transition

5. We recognise the importance of our strong partnership on energy, particularly through interconnection and integrating electricity from renewable sources. Following COP26, we will demonstrate our commitment to meeting our shared net zero ambitions by deepening our cooperation on interconnection and offshore wind, including sharing information, expertise and best practice.

6. The next step in delivering this important joint agenda will be the Belgo-British Conference in January 2022 at which we will sign a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation Towards Future Electricity Interconnection. This will include exploring linking wind farms to interconnection to help integrate renewable energy whilst providing secure energy supplies at the lowest cost for consumers. Recognising

the strength of our existing collaboration, and our shared desire to decarbonise, we will work together to explore the production and use of low carbon hydrogen including through sharing expertise and insights on policy, regulation and research.

III) Health and Biopharma

7. The UK and Belgium are world leaders in pharmaceuticals and biotechnology with joint projects, important investments, and a shared focus on addressing societal needs. Our industrial operators and research communities are deeply integrated. Reciprocal investments and joint research projects create a unique axis between our two countries. In this regard, we commit to exchanging information, sharing expertise and best practices to advance the implementation of our respective biopharma strategies. The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced our commitment to building on that unique axis, investing in cutting edge science, and to making the case for resilient and reliable global supply chains.

8. We reaffirm our commitment to help vaccinate the world by the end of 2022 and continue to promote access to vaccines across the globe. To achieve this, we jointly commit to continue operating our world-leading COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing facilities and to support the sharing of knowledge. We will join forces to coordinate through multilateral initiatives, such as COVAX, the World Bank, and the African Union's Vaccine Acquisition Task Force. To bolster preparedness for any future pandemic, we commit to cooperating as closely as possible to support sustainable financing and enhanced WHO governance. We will jointly promote the export of vaccines and we will continue to advocate against barriers to pharmaceutical exports.

9. We recognise the value of our cooperation on research and development, and we acknowledge the importance of investment. We welcome the important investments announced by UK companies in Belgium and Belgian companies in the UK. We encourage the deepening of our partnership in the areas of research, science, technology and innovation, enhancing collaboration and exchange between our universities, research institutions and companies including under Horizon Europe.

IV) Security

10. Belgium and the UK enjoy a close and historic defence relationship, grounded in shared sacrifice through both World Wars, and a founding membership of NATO. In the face of common challenges and threats to our individual and collective security, we affirm our joint commitment to our existing bilateral defence cooperation and our shared intent to explore ways to enhance it further through a bilateral framework for our Armed Forces.

11. We are both committed to the strategic unity and defence of Europe and will continue to work together to ensure Euro-Atlantic security through NATO, with strong military capability, enhanced resilience, and a united political voice. We will support NATO adapting to the new strategic environment, including cyber security and countering hybrid threats, in close cooperation with the EU. We recognise that the NATO-EU strategic partnership is essential for the security and prosperity of our nations and of the Euro-Atlantic area. We will continue to support military transparency in the Euro-Atlantic area through the OSCE's conventional arms control and risk resolution mechanisms. We will continue to support arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation efforts.

12. We recognise the importance of international cooperation in the domain of cyber security and broader hybrid, and state threats. We want to step up our bilateral cooperation by sharing experience and

methods, exchanging information on cyber, hybrid and state threats and vulnerabilities, and supporting academic and private research and training. To this end, we will reinforce bilateral cooperation between our respective government departments on issues of mutual interest.

13. We reaffirm our commitment to the international system and rules which have been essential for our collective security, economic progress, and the welfare of our societies. We will seek to strengthen existing pillars of the international order and move forward discussions on how international law applies to state behaviour in the future frontiers of cyberspace, emerging technology and data. We will seek to build the capacity, agility, and resolve of our partners and Allies, in Europe and beyond, to counter the shared security challenges we face.

14. We reaffirm our closer partnership on security and commit to working together to tackle shared threats such as terrorism, and serious and organised crime, including human smuggling. We will enhance our close security partnership and deepen cooperation between our law enforcement and criminal justice agencies, complementing ongoing work via the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement. We will strengthen the legal framework for cooperation between our law enforcement agencies through a Cooperation Agreement, with a particular focus on information exchange. We will strengthen our bilateral and multilateral law enforcement data sharing, including via INTERPOL. We will maintain a close dialogue on counter-terrorism cooperation and strengthen other areas including on serious organised crime.

15. The UK and Belgium will strengthen their efforts to prevent irregular migration to the UK through mutual information exchange and effective security technology and operational enhancements, notably at Zeebrugge port and along the Belgian coast. In cooperation with neighbouring countries, we will improve joint working on illegal flows, including to disrupt human trafficking and human smuggling networks and prevent loss of life. We will address gaps in joint cooperation with a view to investing further in security at our ports and will strengthen our strategic dialogue on migration cooperation. We will work to promote multilateral dialogue with our neighbours to enhance cooperation on small boats in order to prevent illegal sea crossing towards the UK, including through operational cooperation, intelligence sharing, surveillance and preventing secondary movements within the Schengen area.

V) Structuring our Bilateral Cooperation

16. In order to ensure the implementation of this Joint Declaration and explore further steps to enhance our bilateral cooperation, we will establish a UK-Belgium Strategic Working Group, comprised of high-level officials, to meet at least annually and tasked with reviewing the full range of topics. The Strategic Working Group will provide the basis for periodic political consultations between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Federal Government of the Kingdom of Belgium including at leader level. Our Foreign Ministers will meet annually to review the strategic direction of our bilateral relationship.

17. Our cooperation is consistent with, and also benefits from, the UK-EU framework and both sides see the positive development of that relationship as supportive of our bilateral efforts. 18. We encourage further exchange between stakeholders in our countries to contribute to the full realisation of the potential the relationship between our countries holds. We consider close interaction between our civil societies to be of great importance. To this end, we welcome the activities of the Belgo-British Conference.

Signed in London and in Brussels on 30 November in the English language.

For the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

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