

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves of Estonia, President Andris Berzins of Latvia, and President Dalia Grybauskaite of Lithuania

August 30, 2013

The United States of America, the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia, and the Republic of Lithuania reaffirm our commitment to strengthening our relations by jointly expanding trade ties in pursuit of economic prosperity, enhancing strategic cooperation to address global security challenges, and advancing democracy and human rights around the world. As NATO allies, bound by our shared transatlantic values and holding a common vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace, we resolve to continue and expand our cooperation in the Baltic region and beyond to build a more prosperous, secure, and inclusive future.

The Baltic states have each undergone significant transformations since the restoration of independence just over two decades ago. Fulfilling the promise of the 1998 Baltic Charter, they have become valued members of NATO and the European Union. In joining the ranks of the world's most developed economies in organizations such as OECD and the Eurozone, and assuming the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union, their positive influence on global security and economic issues continues to grow.

As we prepare for the opportunities and challenges that will arise in the coming years, we recognize that cooperation—with and among the Baltic states, with other regional partners such as the Nordics, and in transatlantic and international forums—will be crucial to our success. To this end, we have a shared interest in further developing cooperative, mutually respectful relations with all states in the region. We are stronger and our reach is greater when we work collaboratively and combine efforts in pursuit of our common goals.

We recognize and reaffirm our commitment to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP) negotiations as a generational opportunity to expand the strong cultural and economic ties between Europe and the United States. T-TIP will not only establish a high-standard, comprehensive agreement that will strengthen the global trading system, but it will also promote competitiveness and growth, adding to the millions of jobs—including Baltic and American jobs—that are already supported by trade and investment across the Atlantic.

As a reliable and diverse supply of energy is a crucial element of economic prosperity, we reaffirm our commitment to strengthening energy security in the Baltic region. We recognize the importance of implementing the EU's Third Energy Directive and developing the projects included in the Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan, in order to diversify sources of energy, develop transparency in energy markets, and provide the basis for sustained economic growth in the entire region. The United States strongly supports the Baltic states in their efforts to develop domestic energy resources and clean energy solutions—including energy efficiency—in pursuit of our shared goals of strengthening energy security, addressing climate change, and promoting nuclear safety and security.

Recognizing the benefits and risks of our increasing dependence on information technology and cyberspace, we will strengthen our engagement on cyber issues regionally and globally. We will seek to advance the cybersecurity of critical infrastructure in the region through public/private cooperation. We will continue to cooperate in the investigation and

prosecution of cybercrimes. We will strive to advance our shared vision of internet freedom by engaging with other countries, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector. Our efforts support a common goal: an open, interoperable, secure, and reliable Internet that protects privacy and civil liberties, enables the free flow of information and ideas, and promotes the innovation essential to modern economies.

The security of the United States and Europe is indivisible. As established in the Baltic Charter, and as NATO allies, the United States has a profound and enduring interest in the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The Baltic states make significant contributions to NATO missions in Afghanistan and elsewhere, and we are committed to maintaining and expanding Alliance capabilities—for collective defense, cooperative security, and crisis management—within Europe and beyond. Recognizing the value of practical cooperation, we will work together to find efficiencies and make the most of limited resources. We will coordinate within NATO to identify and develop high-priority capabilities and training and exercise opportunities, while also pursuing regional joint procurement and other security projects where mutually beneficial.

As NATO transitions to a post-2014 non-combat mission in Afghanistan, it will be crucial to maintain the Alliance's ability to provide for collective defense and contribute to global security. Though economic times are challenging, we must all ensure that we sustain adequate levels of defense investment to maintain a capable, deployable, and interoperable force. In this regard, we reaffirm our commitment to achieve or maintain defense spending at 2 percent of GDP.

In the last two decades, the Baltic states have undertaken impressive democratic transitions, and they now demonstrate leadership in promoting democracy and human rights and strengthening civil society in the countries of the EU's Eastern Partnership, as well as through development assistance to other nations undergoing transition. We will seek opportunities to expand upon these efforts—together, and also with like-minded countries in the region—so the Baltic states can share their successful transition experiences with emerging democracies around the world.

Reflecting our close ties and shared values, we reaffirm our commitment to continue to promote the rule of law as a foundation for a community of free and democratic nations, and to the responsibility of all societies to safeguard and respect the universal rights, civil liberties, and human dignity of all individuals within their territories.

The Baltic states remain grateful to the United States and the American people for their non-recognition policy during the Cold War. Our warm relations are anchored by close interpersonal ties and the rich contributions that the Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian diasporas have made to the multi-ethnic culture of the United States.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

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