

FINAL STATEMENT OF THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE HUNGARIAN STANDING CONFERENCE (BUDAPEST, 17 NOVEMBER 2002)

The Hungarian Standing Conference (MÁÉRT) held its regular session in Budapest on November 17, 2002. In the spirit of earlier meetings, the participants had a sincere and open dialogue on developments affecting the fate of Hungarian communities living in the various countries. Members of the Standing Conference reaffirmed that the contacts and cooperation between Hungarians in various parts of the world serve not only to enhance the sense of the common Hungarian identity, but also to consummate the European practice of democracy and solidarity, and to respect and develop good neighborly relations which strengthen regional security and cooperation.

Members of the Standing Conference expressed satisfaction that in accordance with the consensus decision of the Conference, the Government [of Hungary] conducted substantive negotiations with the various organizations of Hungarians living beyond the borders, as well as with the parliamentary parties in Hungary, on amending the Law on Hungarians Living in Neighboring Countries. They agreed that the Government should submit to Parliament the proposed amendment which preserves the original objectives of the Law, and expands upon them to the extent possible for the kin-state, while assuring that it meets international requirements in line with the European practice of minority protection, thus serving the interest of the Hungarian communities concerned, and which is also in harmony with the purpose of enhancing good neighborly relations, which serves the interests of the region and Europe as a whole. An ad hoc committee consisting of the participants of the Standing Conference formulated the principles to be observed in drafting the amendment, which are annexed to the Final Statement. In the event that a substantive deviation from the mutually agreed proposal of the amendment should become necessary, the members of the Standing Conference are convinced that a new meeting of the Standing Conference Experts Committee should be convened to consider the changes.

[The members] expressed support for the [Hungarian] Government's efforts to secure the conditions for implementing the Law through bilateral negotiations – and where necessary and possible – [through] agreements with the neighboring countries.

The participants of the Standing Conference heard presentations on a number of ideas concerning cooperation in the various fields of Hungarian-Hungarian relations. They agreed that discussion should continue on the coordination of programs within the working committees of the Standing Conference, with special emphasis on involving the communities concerned in the preparation and development of the especially important projects. The Standing Conference members emphasized the importance of insuring the availability of financial resources to fund the projects thus prepared and developed.

The participants of the Standing Conference expressed support for the process of European Union accession and preparation for membership. The opportunity for Hungary to join the European Union as a full-fledged member is a major and far-reaching event which serves the interest of all Hungarians. The participants of the Standing Conference support the need to amend the Constitution [of Hungary] in connection with the legal harmonization requirement of the European Union in the knowledge that the constitutional responsibility of the Republic of Hungary for Hungarians living beyond the borders will not diminish after the accession to the European Union, but increase to the extent possible.

European Union accession will be a historic opportunity for the advancement of Hungary, for the strengthening of the common cultural and linguistic identity of Hungarians, and for renewal of the sense of national solidarity and cohesion in a European context. In this regard, they find it important, and express support for, the efforts of other countries in the region to seek full integration in the Euro-Atlantic and European co-operation. They agree that the Hungarian communities living in the countries concerned - Slovakia, Slovenia and Romania - should play an active role in supporting the process of integration, and express their interest in the further development of minority rights within the European Union.

The Standing Conference participants consider it a common goal to assure that the Hungarian government and the organizations representing Hungarians in the countries concerned find the solutions necessary to guarantee that assuming and faithfully executing the responsibilities deriving from Hungary's European Union membership, will not result in creating new dividing lines, and that states with various dynamics of development will receive assistance and the opportunity to overcome their shortcomings, and that they, in fact, will have the real possibility for joining in the European co-operation. In developing relations with the countries bordering the European Union, the participants consider it especially important to strengthen the major pillars of European progress, namely, to ensure the freest possible flow of people, ideas and goods. It is in this manner that the participants find the possibilities to implement the Schengen border regime in such a way as to ensure the security of the member states, and also establish the pre-conditions to natural human contacts and economic co-operation. The participants of the Standing Conference will continue to do their utmost to ensure that their countries work for the elimination of visa requirements.

The participants welcome the intention of the Government [of Hungary] to convene a special session of the Standing Conference in Spring 2003, the primary purpose of which will be to draft joint recommendations in connection with Hungary's accession to the European Union, designed to successfully enhance Hungarian-Hungarian contacts under the new circumstances.

The participants of the Standing Conference welcome the steps taken by Romania - resulting from the consistent efforts of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania to represent the interests of the Hungarian community - in the interest of returning nationalized lands, forest and real properties, including the creation of the necessary legal framework to settle the issue of Church properties.

The participants of the Standing Conference find it important that members of the larger Hungarian communities, by establishing a common platform, are able to utilize the means of democracy to achieve the effective representation of community interests. They welcome the fact that the Hungarian Coalition Party has again assumed a significant role in the new governing coalition of Slovakia, and that, from this government position, it will be able to make an effective contribution so that the Slovak Republic achieves her goals regarding the Euro-Atlantic and European co-operation.

The Standing Conference expresses the hope that Slovakia will intensify its efforts in the future as well to fully comply with its commitments to international organizations, with special reference to the Council of Europe.

The participants of the Standing Conference welcome the establishment of the Hungarian National Council, which will play a major role in the realization of minority self-government for the Hungarians of Vojvodina, vital to the future of the community.

The participants of the Standing Conference welcome the efforts by members of the United States Congress to ensure that in the process of NATO enlargement the member states urge, and closely monitor, fulfillment of the legitimate requirements of Hungarian minority communities in the candidate countries, as an important measure of a democratic society.

The participants support the preparation of a professional sociological survey on Hungarians in the Western countries, conducted with the involvement and participation of those concerned, which can enhance the creation of institutional contacts between Hungary and Hungarians living in Western countries.

The members of the Standing Conference consider it the joint responsibility and task of both the mother country and the Hungarian national communities outside Hungary to achieve a substantial reversal in the negative demographic trend of the past decades by creating the conditions necessary for Hungarians to remain in their own homeland. They welcome the intention of the Government [of Hungary] to utilize the economic benefits resulting from Hungary's accession to the European Union to develop long-term strategies – with the involvement of the organizations representing Hungarians abroad – to increase Hungarian participation in business ventures and the process of privatization in neighboring countries. The participants re-affirm that in the coming years this will be the most important objective, the achievement of which can no longer be delayed, and which requires disagreements to be set aside, a common resolve, joint efforts and the search for new solutions.

Budapest, 17 November 2002

Organizations Signing the Concluding Document:

Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania	Béla Markó
Hungarian Coalition Party	Béla Bugár
Alliance of Hungarians in Voivodina	József Kasza
Hungarian Democratic Party of Voivodina	András Ágoston
Hungarian Democratic Alliance of Ukraine	Mihály Tóth
Hungarian Cultural Association of SubCarpathia	Miklós Kovács
Democratic Community of Hungarians in Croatia	József Csörgits
Alliance of Hungarians from Croatia	Sándor Jakab
Hungarian National Autonomous Community of Muravidék	György Tomka
Hungarian Human Rights Foundation	László Hámos, Tamás Papp
Federation of National Organizations in Western Europe	Ernő Deák
UEN	József Komlóssy
Hungarian Socialist Party	Gábor Hárs
Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Party	Zsolt Németh
Hungarian Democratic Forum	Miklós Csapody
Alliance of Free Democrats	Mátyás Eörsi
Government of the Republic of Hungary	Vilmos Szabó

Principles Drafted and for Support Suggested by the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts Responsible for Developing a Common Position of the Participants of the Standing Conference on Recommendations and Comments Relating to the Proposed Amendment of the Law on Hungarians Living in Neighboring Countries

1. Concerning the issue of educational assistance, the Committee:

- supports the expansion of the educational assistance to families with only one child;
- establishes as a basic rule that the beneficiary of the assistance is the child by way of application submitted by parent or legal representative;
- adopts the proposal of the Hungarian Coalition Party that recipient of the assistance may also be the parents' or teachers' association which functions alongside the respective educational institution;
- proposes that the provisions regarding the forwarding procedure be removed from the law, and that this question be regulated at the level of procedural legislative acts.

2. Concerning the issue of employment, the Committee:

- supports language combining the current versions of text into one, as follows: “General rules concerning the authorisation of employment of foreign nationals in Hungary shall be applied to the employment on the territory of the Republic of Hungary of persons falling within the scope of this Law. Derogation from the general rules may be provided for by international treaty.”

3. Concerning the subjects of the law, the Committee:

- agrees that the subjects of the law are defined under Section 1 of the Law;
- agrees that entitlement to receive benefits and assistance shall consist of possession of the “Hungarian Certificate” or the “Hungarian Dependant Certificate.”

4. Concerning the procedure for issuance of the “Hungarian Certificate” and the “Hungarian Dependant Certificate”, the Committee:

- agrees that the Hungarian Government will regulate this matter at the level of executive orders by determining, in each case, the identity of organizations having a role in the practical implementation procedure after consultation with representatives of the relevant member organizations of the Standing Conference.

Budapest, 17 November 2002

[Quelle: <http://www.htmh.hu/archivum/hsc6.htm>]