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Welcome speech by Yegor Stadny, Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine

Dear BFUG Members, Consultative Members and Partners,

I am happy to welcome you at the 69th Bologna Follow-Up Group meeting in Kyiv. It is a great honour for me to greet you as Ukraine co-chairs the Bologna Process for the first time in the history of the European Higher Education Area.

The ambition to create common higher education architecture throughout Europe has come a long way until translated into the Bologna Declaration just before the dawn of the new millennium. Major landmarks of the Bologna Process genesis include the European Community University, the Socrates-Erasmus programme, the Sorbonne Declaration. European citizenship, shared values, belonging to a common social and cultural space and human growth all became the building blocks of the Bologna Process.

Having joined the European Higher Education Area in 2005, Ukraine has explicitly committed itself to enhancing European values, to amplifying European dimension, and to building a Europe of Knowledge.

A Europe of Knowledge that recognizes the role of academia in developing stable, peaceful and democratic societies. In the face of hybrid threats to global peace and security, amidst the growing turmoil and unease, universities no longer have a moral right to sit idle as an ivory tower. Violation of international law shall not be tolerated. Ukraine calls upon academic communities to unite their efforts in countering hybrid warfare. Universities shall become the agents of change and advocate for adherence to the rule of international law. In the upcoming period, the European Higher Education Area should pay close attention to upgrading security of national and cross-border higher education infrastructure and cultivating information hygiene for all the higher education stakeholders. Coordinated joint efforts are required if we want to preserve academic freedom as one of the core values of the Bologna Process. Our chances to eliminate the potentially most dangerous type of war and build a peaceful society in the future depend on whether we succeed in teaching our students to discern hybrid wars and resist them together today.

A Europe of Knowledge that provides its citizens with quality learning to result in public externalities. Knowledge economy continues to be the driving force in developing global communities and local societies. The central value of knowledge for the economic welfare necessitates discussions on enhancing the relevance of learning and teaching and fostering the employability of graduates. Ukraine urges the members of the European Higher Education Area to revisit the Bologna Process action lines on strengthening economic growth of its member countries. We need sustainable higher education that benefits both professional aspirations of the individual and wider objectives of the society. The potential of universities in reaching Sustainable Development Goals is not yet unlocked and should be carefully explored in the new decade.

A Europe of Knowledge that facilitates brain circulation and mutually beneficial cooperation. We express our gratitude to the European Commission for its efforts in promoting interconnectedness of higher education stakeholders and welcome its commitment to increasing social dimension in the next Erasmus+ programme for 2021-2027. Ukraine is an active participant in the European Union Programme Erasmus+ that strengthens human and social capital of students, academic and administrative staff. Yet, as outgoing and incoming mobility remains to be unbalanced among various members of the Bologna Process, the issue of brain drain is growing more urgent. Ukraine expresses its deep concern over that some

higher education systems across the European Higher Education Area undeservingly remain *terra incognita* for international students body and calls for equitable academic mobility in the upcoming Erasmus+ framework. We give credit to the breakthrough role that the European Universities Initiative have to play in shaping the future European higher education landscape. Ukraine calls upon to enable all higher education institutions of the European Higher Education Area have fair access to these strategic partnerships and boost competitiveness of their national higher education systems.

A Europe of Knowledge that takes notice of all its members' needs and allows them equal chances to succeed. National policies convergence of the last 20 years resulted in solid implementation of the Bologna tools and good increase in comparability of higher education systems across the European Higher Education Area. Ukraine welcomes the efforts of the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group in tackling uneven implementation via the peer support method and hopes it continues its work after 2020. All the while, diversity in meeting the Bologna commitments among the Bologna Process countries persists. Ukraine asks the Bologna Follow-Up Group to create governance and working methods for the next decade that allow for cohesive development of the Bologna Process in all its member countries. Legal shortcomings, financial limitations and management inefficiencies shall not prevent any country of the European Higher Education Area from unleashing its full potential.

The Bologna Process has achieved a lot, due to diligent and conscientious work of its members, profound expertise of consultative Members, novel ideas of partners, and constant support of the Secretariat. The commenced decade will definitely bring challenges, but also opportunities to revisit hardened beliefs and proceed with building a Europe of Knowledge with renewed vigour. On this way, Ukraine is a credible partner committed to intensity the intergovernmental cooperation within the European Higher Education Area.

I wish you fruitful discussions, original insights and look forward to welcoming you in a few months at the Ministerial Conference in Rome.