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Op Ed on the European Institute of Peace

We, the Foreign Ministers of nine European countries – from within the EU, as well as outside – have joined together to launch the European Institute of Peace (EIP) to help tackle some of the challenges of today's world. Tomorrow Monday, in Brussels, we will present the first President ever of the Institute.

Generations of hostility and wars in Europe have been replaced by deep political and economic integration. Most of the continent is characterised by democracy and rule of law.

But recent developments in Ukraine remind us of the fragile nature of this progress and the danger of disrespecting internationally agreed frameworks of security and stability. Europe's profound strength is often underestimated. Yet our achievements over the past half century can never be taken for granted. Standing up for peace and European values on our own continent and in the world requires strong political resolve.

We must continue to deliver on Europe's promise. Respectful of the diversity in Europe and cognizant of the multiplicity of needs abroad, the governments that we represent take a 'can do, will engage' attitude.

This is the spirit in which the European Institute of Peace was set up.

The EIP should help overcome inertia created by fear and instead foster a courageous constituency in support of peaceful solutions. It will contribute to the global peace agenda through a close partnership with EU institutions in order to prevent, manage and resolve conflict. And it is offered as an independent and flexible partner to the EU and other institutions, complementing and enhancing the set of instruments already at the EU's disposal.

It should support engagement and build capacity in mediation and dialogue, including by providing conflict analysis, training, facilitation and coaching. It should pursue multitrack diplomacy and promote best practice in conflict management. It should serve as an operational hub, connecting expertise and sharing knowledge. And it should be a bridge with European civil society efforts.

By joining together in this new initiative we are depositing trust into an institute that is committed to working with governments and the EU, while remaining autonomous to act rapidly and creatively, and bringing its own competences and resources to do so.

In parallel, we are committed to developing the mediation capacities of the EU as such.

Europe must rise to the formidable challenges of our time threatening peace, freedom and sustainable development both at global level and in its immediate neighbourhood.

The European Institute of Peace is an ambitious way to advance European capacities and augment the diplomatic toolkit of the EU and beyond.

Didier Reynders, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium

Erkki Tuomioja, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Federica Mogherini, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy

János Martonyi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary

Jean Asselborn, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg

Radosław Sikorski, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland

José Manuel García-Margallo y Marfil, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain

Carl Bildt, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden

Didier Burkhalter, President and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Swiss Confederation