

## **Joint Communiqué of the V4 Defence Ministers** **10<sup>th</sup> of June, 2019, Piešťany**

Already for a quarter century of its existence, Visegrad cooperation has gone the path from coordination of countries' integration processes to close regional cooperation in the field of security and defence, where we have reached practical and effective outcomes with an added value and contributed to a stable security environment in Europe. V4 also became an important complement to our bilateral defence cooperation and our cooperation within NATO and the EU.

Currently, we are facing a number of demanding challenges. Some of them are not of strictly military nature, but can impact areas important for our security, such as the upcoming 5G communication network. Therefore, it is more than essential to act in unity - act as one. During the Slovak V4 Presidency, we have had many discussions on various levels and possibilities of widening the current V4 cooperation have been put on the table.

One of the flagships of our cooperation in the V4 format is undoubtedly the V4 EU Battle Group project (V4 EU BG). We provided joint Battle Group in 2016, our current Battle Group will be on stand-by for 6 months from 1st July 2019, and we have already agreed to offer the V4 EU Battle Group in the first half of 2023. This project has brought positive results not only for our armed forces, namely increased interoperability and close military interaction, but also in the area of multinational cooperation and where partners like Ukraine in 2016 or Croatia this year contribute to our effort. Regular V4 EU BGs foster credibility of EU ambition and reflect our PESCO commitment.

According to the Memorandum of Understanding signed on the 08<sup>th</sup> June 2018 we continue with the preparation process for the Joint Logistic Support Group Headquarters (JLSG HQ) which is a tangible contribution to the security of the North-Atlantic region and another flagship of our cooperation. It proves that V4 cooperation is contributing to fulfil our commitments towards NATO. We see also further potential for cooperation in the planning and capability development in which we proceed on the basis of the integrated V4 Capability Development Matrix.

We welcome the fact that the V4 cooperation contributes to NATO efforts. Strengthening Allied deterrence and defence, particularly on the Eastern flank, gives the opportunity for deepening practical cooperation of our armed forces. It refers to the eFP battlegroup in Latvia as well as the NATO Very High Readiness Joint Task Force in 2020, with Poland as a framework nation. We strongly support efforts to improve the NATO command and control in our region. We welcome the important role of Multinational Corps North-East in Szczecin and Multinational Division North-East in Elbląg. We also appreciate the establishment of the Multinational Division Central which will contribute to this effect.

NATO Readiness Initiative is a huge step forward to NATO's deterrence and defence and we are certain that close regional cooperation and mutually beneficial solutions are essential for our V4 format. In this regard we reaffirm our commitment to increase the spending up to 2% of national GDP on defence out of which 20% on modernisation of armed forces. Increasing our defence spending improves readiness and capabilities of our armed forces and thus allows us to contribute substantially to a more secure world.

We welcome the progress of the EU defence initiatives. Taking into account the complexity of these processes, we strongly need a frank discussion on their coherence and future direction, as well as on their possible impact on relations with partners. PESCO has become an important part of the EU defence cooperation since the EU Global Strategy was adopted in 2016. European Defence Fund could play a vital role in strengthening the EU's defence capabilities. Together with Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and Capability Development Plan (CDP), PESCO and European Defence Fund (EDF) should deepen defence cooperation such as the development of European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) across the EU, increasing military capabilities development which could contribute to Member States and collective defence as well as reinforcement of the EU cooperation with NATO and the increasing of Europe's burden sharing within NATO.

We agree, that the EU defence cooperation must allow for the like-minded third states' participation, including in PESCO projects, as this issue has direct impact on the quality of the EU – NATO relations, as well as on future of PESCO itself. We will act together to assure reasonable conditions for third states to participate in PESCO projects.

We agree that CSDP missions and operations represent the most visible example of the EU defence cooperation, being in the interest of the EU citizens and providing comprehensive response to current security challenges. In the Western Balkans region, we perceive the operation EUFOR Althea as one of the most important stabilizing factors, contributing to safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina and therefore, we need to focus on the continuation of the operation's executive mandate. Nevertheless, the current geographic focus and engagement of the EU in CSDP missions and operations is mainly aimed at Africa and the Sahel region in particular. Therefore, we continuously support the stabilising efforts and the regionalisation process to increase the security of the region. We will also look for opportunities how joint V4 actions could contribute to the fight against terrorism and prevention of irregular migration at their roots, preventing the threats from reaching the European continent. However, we strongly stress that CSDP missions and operations as well as EU support to partners and neighbours should aim at facing threats and challenges both in South and East, from all geographic directions, in line with 360 degrees approach.

We reaffirm our support for strengthening EU – NATO cooperation, where one of the flagship projects is Military Mobility. We are fully committed to improve Military Mobility as it was set out in Council Conclusions from 25 June 2018 and Brussels NATO Summit

Declaration in 2018. Our goal is to ensure that personnel, assets and material can move into, across and beyond Europe more effectively. We are certain that one of the biggest challenges in this matter is the improvement of the necessary transport infrastructure and its sufficient adaptation to military requirements.

A new promising area of cooperation is in the domain of the medical services. We welcome the results of the V4 military medical services "VIMIMED" conference, which led to establishment of joint V4 expert groups.

Last but not least, we welcome the continuation of the V4+ dialogues that enable strategic discussion with our Allies and Partners. During the Slovak V4 Presidency we had a fruitful meeting in the V4 + France + Germany format. We see V4+ format as the best way for intensive strategic discussion with our Allies and Partners and are ready to continue, even intensify such cooperation and meetings.