



JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP MINISTERS OF DEFENCE

Budapest, 27 March 2018

The Visegrad Group embodies our regional cooperation, rooted in a rich and deep shared historical heritage. It helped our countries become members of two key institutions in the Euro-Atlantic security architecture that also have a global reach, NATO and the European Union. This status, along with our region's dynamic development and close V4 cooperation, has given Central Europe a clear voice in shaping the future of the transatlantic strategic community. It also made it our duty to play an active part in protecting the security and prosperity of the Euro-Atlantic area and safeguarding the heritage and values that led to its extraordinary success. Through close regional cooperation in the field of security and defence, we can come to practical and effective outcomes with an added value that can contribute to a stable security environment in Europe. Bearing this in mind, we, the Ministers of Defence of the Visegrad Group, met today in Budapest, Hungary to discuss a wide range of issues of common interest and outstanding relevance to our security and defence, take stock of V4 defence cooperation under the Hungarian Presidency, and provide political guidance for its further development.

The Brussels NATO Summit in July will mark a further milestone after the Wales and the Warsaw Summits in NATO's successful adaptation to a rapidly evolving security environment. The Alliance remains the bedrock of our security, marked by unity and solidarity that are underpinned by equitable transatlantic burden-sharing. Honouring the Wales Defence Investment Pledge is of primary importance. Our countries' defence spending has been on a positive trajectory for years and we have either fulfilled, or are on a publicly declared track to devote an annual 2% of GDP to defence by 2024. We will continue to dedicate an appropriate share of this increasing funding to the modernisation of our armed forces in line with NATO capability goals. We task the V4 Planning Group to finalize the Memorandum of Understanding on meeting our common NATO capability target, the V4 Joint Logistics Support Group Headquarters for our signature at the June NATO Defence Ministerial.

With its strengthened deterrence and defence posture, the Alliance stands ready to respond to any threat from any direction. We express gratitude to our men and women in uniform for making sacrifices for our common security. In particular, we welcome that the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) battlegroups achieved full operational capability. We agreed that besides eFP, upcoming rotations of NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force also present an opportunity to further deepen V4 cooperation. We discussed the ongoing adaptation of NATO's Command Structure, and agreed that one of the new Land Component Commands should be established in Poland.

Following a 360 degree approach, we discussed the threats and challenges NATO has to face from the South, including terrorism and illegal mass migration. We noted that the bulk of our deployments are in operations and missions in various crisis or conflict zones in Europe, the Middle East or Central Asia that NATO either leads or is otherwise involved in. We welcome that NATO has joined the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, a step the V4 supported, and agreed that the Alliance can do even more to fight terrorism and project stability. In particular, we

stress the importance of the regional hub at JFC Naples reaching its full capability as soon as possible. We agreed that NATO's training activity in Iraq should be converted into a non-combat mission, and that our efforts under the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) Initiative could also be further intensified: for instance, DCB packages should be launched for more partner countries such as Libya or Tunisia, if conditions are met.

Furthermore, we welcome the significant results of deepening NATO-EU cooperation since the Joint Declaration was issued at the Warsaw Summit in key areas such as parallel and co-ordinated exercises, countering hybrid warfare, cyber security or operational cooperation in the Mediterranean to help tackle illegal migration. We call for sustaining this momentum, and strongly support implementing the new set of priorities as well, with special regard to military mobility, capacity building in the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood, harmonisation of requirements for rapid reaction forces and co-operation in capability development.

We reaffirm our support for strengthening EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in full complementarity with NATO, and welcome recent progress. Europe needs to have credible military crisis management tools at its disposal to act in its own neighbourhood in cases that need not engage the Alliance's unique capabilities. Launching Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) was a historic step, and now we need to deliver by developing concrete capabilities in a timely manner that could meet NATO requirements as well. New initiatives to use community funding such as the European Defence Fund (EDF), including the European Defence Industry Development Plan (EDIDP) can be valuable tools in doing so. We agreed that SMEs and mid-caps have an important part to play, and noted that the V4 National Armament Directors (NAD) regularly discuss these opportunities for cooperation. We agreed that broadening the scope of common costs related to EU Battlegroups (BG) under the Athena mechanism would be an important step to increase their deployability.

We welcome progress in preparing for the next standby of the V4 EU BG in the second half of 2019 and task our Chiefs of Defence to take the necessary steps in order to finalize the technical agreement. We stress that work started to increase military mobility is key both in terms of the usability of our forces and NATO-EU cooperation. Furthermore, for reasons of efficiency and transparency, we emphasize the need to find the appropriate mechanism for involving third states. In this vein, we look forward to discussing the future of European security and opportunities for cooperation with our UK counterpart during the Hungarian Presidency.

Finally, we emphasize the importance of the role the EU plays and might further play in projecting stability with its unique means of capacity building, bearing in mind the need for its flexible geographical scope. As the migration crisis has also shown, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. That is why, for example, the V4 offered 35 million euros to strengthen the border protection capacity of Libyan authorities, contributes to supporting the G5 Sahel Force, and notes with interest the idea of creating a European Peace Facility.