

# **JOINT DECLARATION OF THE MINISTERS OF DEFENCE OF THE *CENTRAL EUROPEAN DEFENCE COOPERATION***

*19 JUNE 2017*

## **PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC**

*With the aim to further develop cooperation amongst our countries in the framework of the Central European Defence Cooperation (CEDC), we, the CEDC Ministers of Defence:*

- I. Appreciate the progress achieved in CEDC over the last two years, particularly in the area of managing migration. We welcome the first draft of the Joint Action Plan based on civil, police and military capacities compiled under Austria's leadership. Encourage the Ministries of Internal Affairs to join the Ministries of Defence and finalise the document.
- II. Have already succeeded in establishing a joint situational awareness about the migration situation and ensured that appropriate measures can be rapidly activated in order to utilise all necessary civil, police and military resources should the need arise.
- III. Recognise the fact that common EU approach in protecting the external borders of the EU is the most important course of action to tackle the negative consequences of the migration crisis.
- IV. Will work jointly at the EU level in order to ensure the effective protection of external borders using all necessary civil, police and military capacities. We are confident that our joint approach can be an inspiring model for the EU, and we therefore advocate that it be implemented within EU institutions.
- V. Are convinced that tackling the root causes of migration in the countries of origin must remain at the top of our agendas in the EU and other cooperation formats. Supporting the countries of origin and transit is indispensable to establish a realistic chance of stemming massive, illegal migration to Europe.
- VI. Encourage the international community to work on dismantling the trafficking and smuggling networks that exploit the plight of people in distress to their own profit.
- VII. Encourage our national authorities responsible for outreach programmes to do as much as possible to help stabilise the countries in question.
- VIII. Recognise that, whilst illegal migration is not a primary responsibility of ministries of defence and armed forces, their support may, under specific circumstances and with full respect for national law, be required by the primary responders. We are ready to further

promote CEDC communication, cooperation and coordination in this area and provide assistance if needed.

- IX. Emphasise the importance of ongoing international operations in the Western Balkans and will continue working together to ensure security and stability of the region in the long term. The CEDC countries will closely coordinate their positions on any decisions related to EUFOR Althea Strategic Review process. The CEDC approach can involve partner countries that share EU values, including the respect for international law, and are able and willing to contribute to CSDP missions and operations.
- X. Aim to keep highlighting the issue of security vulnerabilities in the Western Balkans at the EU level to give it greater prominence and visibility and to prompt the EU to pay greater attention to the security situation in the region, while promoting and actively supporting the process of Euro-Atlantic integration of aspirant partners from South-East Europe.
- XI. Will continue, in accordance with the founding principles of CEDC, to explore other possible areas of enhancing mutual security and defence cooperation, particularly in sharing of information, coordinating common positions on EU level, pooling and sharing of capabilities, common training and exercises.
- XII. Emphasise the long-term character of CEDC cooperation and stand ready to further contribute to Europe's defence, security and stability.