

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

10 JUNE 2019

## PIEŠŤANY, SLOVAK REPUBLIC

*Recognizing the strong political and economic relations among us as member states of the European Union, in order to further develop defence cooperation based on the specific national character of the security and defence policy in the framework of the Central European Defence Cooperation (CEDC), we, the Ministers of Defence of CEDC:*

- I. Will continue using CEDC for exchanging views on current regional and EU issues with the possibility to use this format as a coordination forum of our national positions prior to international meetings, for consultations on possible deployments in International Crisis Management activities and strengthening our partnership with the Western Balkan countries;
- II. Welcome the progress made from exploring the idea of a common PESCO project to carrying out concrete steps in preparations of the project “CBRN Surveillance as a Service” under coordination of the Austrian Ministry of Defence. This project represents one of the tangible results of our CEDC cooperation and a step towards improving the overall European CBRN capabilities through the possibility of innovation and enhancing of the detection capability;
- III. Recognize the need for further work on PESCO governance and management rules, in particular regarding the participation of third states in PESCO projects;
- IV. Express concern regarding signs of continued overall fragile situation in the Western Balkans which indicate that a pro-active approach towards the region is needed. We consider our engagement in the region to be a matter of EU’s strategic choice where missing another opportunity to integrate the countries of the region could open further the doors for instability and foreign influence. We remain convinced that Euro-Atlantic integration is the optimal path for the region, as well as Europe;
- V. Reaffirm that the CSDP and other international missions and operations play an important role and serve as stabilizing factors in the Western Balkan region. Therefore, we will continue to support them, with special regard to continuation of EUFOR Althea’s executive mandate;
- VI. Welcome the Austrian initiative regarding an integrated CEDC approach in the Western Balkan region which serves as a solid basis for our further discussions. We will continue to ensure and demonstrate our strong interest in keeping the Region on European path and high on the EU agenda by ad hoc inviting representatives of the Western Balkan countries to CEDC meetings and activities;
- VII. Acknowledge that the common EU comprehensive approach to migration has brought results and improved protection of the EU external borders. We are strongly in favour of tackling the root causes for migration and cooperating with countries of origin and transit. We also continue to underline the need for further strengthening of the external EU border;
- VIII. Remain concerned by certain trends, such as the continued illegal migration to Europe and the prevailing instability in selected African and Middle East countries. Therefore, we are committed to continue our discussions on tackling the crisis;

- IX. Welcome the Hungarian initiative to organize the 2nd COOPSEC exercise in 2019, building upon the lessons learned from COOPSEC 2017 organized by Austria. COOPSEC exercises allow us to rehearse exchanging information and co-ordinating our procedures in executing the supportive tasks of our armed forces related to border protection;
- X. Further welcome the participation of selected partners as observers in COOPSEC 19;
- XI. Recall the founding principles of CEDC, and emphasize the long-term character of our cooperation.