



JOINT STATEMENT

SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE DEFENCE MINISTERIAL MEETING

Ankara, 22nd November 2023

We, the Ministers of Defence of the South-Eastern Europe Defence Ministerial (SEDM) Process:

His Excellency Niko PELESHI, represented by General Director of Defence Policy Gjergji METHOXHA,

His Excellency Zukan HELEZ, represented by State Secretary for Defence Mr, Muhamed SMAJIĆ,

His Excellency Todor TAGAREV, represented by Deputy Minister of Defence Atanas ZAPRYANOV,

His Excellency Ivan ANUŠIĆ, represented by His Excellency Ambassador Hrvoje CVITANOVIĆ

His Excellency Juansher BURCHULADZE,

His Excellency Nikolaos DENDIAS, represented by His Excellency Ambassador Christodoulos LAZARIS,

His Excellency Guido CROSETTO, represented by Undersecretary Matteo PEREGO di CREMNAGO,

His Excellency Minister of Defence Dragan KRAPOVIĆ,

Her Excellency Slavjanka PETROVSKA, represented by Deputy Minister of Defence Tiron JAJAGA,



His Excellency Angel TÎLVĂR,

His Excellency Miloš VUČEVIĆ, represented by State Secretary Nemanja STAROVIĆ,

His Excellency Marjan ŠAREC, represented by Ambassador Gorazd RENČELJ

His Excellency Yaşar GÜLER,

His Excellency Rustem UMEROV, represented by military attaché Oleksandr VOZNIUK,

His Excellency Lloyd J. AUSTIN III, represented by Charge d’Affaires Scott M. OUDKIRK

His Excellency Anatolie NOSATÎL,

gathered in Ankara on the 22nd of November 2023, alongside representatives from regional organizations, to promote constructive regional military collaboration in South-Eastern Europe (SEE), in order to ensure and consolidate cooperation, stability, trust and security in the region.

We thanked the Republic of Türkiye for the hospitality shown to us and the dedication of the Turkish Ministry of National Defence for the excellent organization of this Ministerial.

We highly appreciated the inspiring speeches given by the Minister of National Defence of the Republic of Türkiye, Mr. Yaşar GÜLER, and the Minister of National Defence of Romania, Mr. Angel Tîlvăr, as the representative of the Chair Nation. We expressed appreciation for the opening remarks made by the SEDM Chairperson and acknowledged the proactivity of the Bucharest Chairmanship since the beginning of their tenure in July 2023. We wished Bucharest success in continuing to strengthen the SEDM projects and promoting SEDM as an important platform of regional security. We also thanked Sofia for the two years of dedication during their Chairmanship.

We expressed our appreciation to Skopje for consistent SEEBRIG support and also for their efforts as a host nation for successfully executing this year's Triple



Ceremony, handover-takeover between Sofia and Bucharest Secretariats, handover-takeover of COMSEEBRIG, and commemorating the SEEBRIG 24th Anniversary in Kumanovo, 31st August 2023.

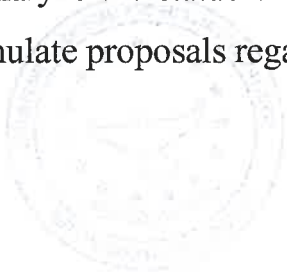
We expressed our appreciation to Athens for its consistent efforts to continue the developing of the IMIHO project, assigning a new Chairperson, and also Belgrade's commitment to host the next IMIHO Technical Working Group meeting (IMIHO TWG) in February 2024, contributing to identifying and optimizing the efficiency and effectiveness of the military hospitals.

We expressed our gratitude to Athens and Bucharest for their dedicated and excellent cooperation in developing and maintaining the SEDM portal and acknowledged, following Athens's proposal, that the SEDM Portal has reached its full potential as a project and can be considered, from now on, the technical platform of the SEDM Process. Nevertheless, the member states commit to continuously support its management, so that it is fully operational for the SEDM needs.

We stressed the importance of continuing the "Female Leaders in Security and Defence" (FLSD) project. We recognized the significance of this initiative for the development and diversification of human resources, as well as for the further integration of women in the national and international defence structures and in the Member States' national Armed Forces. We saluted Belgrade's decision to take over the role of Lead Nation of the FLSD project for the next two years.

We noted the rescheduling of the "South-Eastern Simulation Exercise 24" (SEESIM 24) project for the second semester of 2025 and thanked Bucharest for their offer to host the next edition.

We welcomed the overview on the SEDM developments since the last ministerial meeting, and noted with satisfaction that the SEDM states expressed their willingness to analyze the status of the current initiatives and results achieved so far, so as to formulate proposals regarding their future development.



We appreciated the update on the status of the SEDM projects and supported the assessment on the need for more active engagement of the Member States in the SEDM projects.

We acknowledged Bucharest's proposal for developing a new SEDM project in the resilience field, through close cooperation with the Euro-Atlantic Resilience Center (E-ARC) and recommended further analysis of the added value of this project.

We welcomed and approved Chişinău's request to become a fully-fledged SEDM Member State. We express our determination to support the "open door policy" for the states willing to join the SEDM process and further strengthen the regional cooperation through SEDM's crucial regional role.

We welcomed the presence of the representatives of RACVIAC – Center for Security Cooperation, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), appreciating their valuable efforts in support of the SEDM Process. We will further promote and support the activities organized by them, with the aim to enhance the security dialogue and regional cooperation, thus facilitating countries in achieving the goal of full membership in European and Euro-Atlantic structures, as the best way to preserve stability and security in the region.

We welcomed the report presented by the new COMSEEBRIG, Brigadier General Bilbil BITRI, on the SEEBRIG's HQ activities since the last ministerial meeting. We wished COMSEEBRIG success in his objective to enhance the role and importance of SEEBRIG as a key element of the SEDM Process in the promotion of peace, security, stability and cooperation in SEE, and thanked him for the excellent start of his mandate.

We noted with satisfaction that this year's ministerial meeting marks the celebration of the 24th anniversary of SEEBRIG's activation. We highlighted its importance as



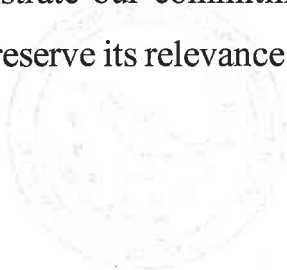
the practical manifestation of the commitment and contribution of the MPFSEE States-Parties to maintaining peace and stability in the region, since its activation.

We appreciated Na-6's initiative, especially on the road to SEEBRIG's 25th anniversary, to share its vision, through a dedicated non-paper, on strengthening the relevance of SEEBRIG. This non-paper outlines the vision on enhancing the significance of the Brigade in the extended region of South-Eastern Europe, increasing its visibility, and transforming it into an active contributor to security and stability. The feasibility of the proposed lines of action will be explored by the PMSC during their next meetings.

We, the MPFSEE Ministers of Defence, approved the SEEBRIG's HQ Annual Plan for 2024, SEEBRIG's HQ Budget for Fiscal Year 2024 and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2025-2028, as well as SEEBRIG's Board of Auditors assignment, based on a Rotational Table, as it was endorsed during the 50th PMSC Meeting in Timișoara, Romania. We also delegated to COMSEEBRIG the authority to allocate funds up to 20% of the approved budget and approved a Common Property Accounts Audit for 2024.

We presented the national views of our countries on the way ahead. We reaffirmed our commitment to encouraging political and military cooperation in SEE in order to strengthen regional security and stability that results in fostering good neighbourly relations.

We agreed on the need to bring SEDM to its full potential by improving the engagement of the SEDM Member States in the political-military dialogue formats and projects within the initiative, as well as by identifying new means to augment SEEBRIG's resources and capabilities. We acknowledged that, by doing so, we demonstrate our commitment to the fundamental goals of the SEDM Process and help preserve its relevance in the volatile context of our region. This has the potential



to be a very important effort taking into account that SEDM has proved to be a successful security-building mechanism in SEE.

We reiterated our full commitment to the universal application of principles of the international law, UN Charter, Helsinki Final Act, to which all SEDM nations agree on, as well as the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council.

We reiterated our firm condemnation of the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, one of the SEDM Member States. We reaffirmed our strong support to the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

We condemned the continued illegal occupation of Georgia's indivisible regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia by the Russian Federation. We reaffirmed our strong support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and stressed the need for peaceful resolution of the Russia-Georgia conflict as well as respecting the fundamental rights of IDPs and refugees to safe and dignified return to their homes.

We noted with serious concern the common challenges that the ongoing migration and refugee flows pose to our region and we reaffirmed our commitment to support the efforts of the international community, within the UN legal framework.

We reaffirmed our strongest condemnation of all terrorist attacks worldwide, noting that terrorism constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. We reiterated our commitment to the joint efforts of the international community to fight all forms and manifestations of terrorism.

We reaffirmed our determination to support the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the aspirant SEE countries. The SEDM Initiative is an instrument of progress, cohesion and union in this context.



We, the MPFSEE Ministers of Defence, reiterated our expectation that Sarajevo finalizes its national procedure for the ratification of the MPFSEE Agreement, in order to welcome Sarajevo as a new Member State.

We expressed our gratitude to Minister of National Defence, Mr. Yaşar GÜLER and Ankara's efforts to plan and successfully conduct the Ministerial Meeting in 2023.

We confirmed that the next Ministerial Meeting will be hosted by Tirana in 2024 in accordance with the agreed schedule.



Ms. Simona COJOCARU

SEDM-CC/ PMSC CHAIRPERSON