



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°924 Vienna, 18 September 2019**

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#### **EU Statement on Politico-Military Cooperation of Visegrád Countries**

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The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome the guest speakers to the Forum for Security Co-operation and thank them for their presentations. We commend the Czech FSC Chairmanship for the attention given to the topic of regional security and defence cooperation. In this context, we reaffirm the importance of the principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act concerning the inherent right of sovereign states to choose whether or not they belong to international organisations, bilateral or multilateral treaties, or treaties of alliance.

We welcome the opportunity to listen again to lessons learnt from the regional military cooperation of Visegrád Group states. This will allow us to share perspectives on the advantages, but also on possible challenges for a cooperative approach in the area of security and defence. We note that, for the Visegrád Group states, closer defence cooperation, based on geographic proximity, common objectives, values and culture, can help close the existing gap between capability needs and available budgets. Given the deterioration in the European security environment and emerging security challenges it is particularly important to strengthen security and defence cooperation. We thank the speakers for presenting the benefits of this deepening cooperation among V4 countries. These efforts complement their collaboration with third states, and with traditional international and regional frameworks, such as NATO and the European Union, and can serve as an example for others. In this context, we thank the V4 States for their regular contribution to the European Security and Defence Policy by providing on a regular basis, including in the current semester, a joint EU Battlegroup for six-month stand-by periods.

We underline that the V4 cooperation fully adheres to the existing principles and commitments in the politico-military area and as such enhances stability and contributes to building trust among participating States.

Mr. Chairman, let me say a few words about some significant developments in the field of European security and defence in recent years focusing on the implementation of the EU Global Strategy. The aim is to improve the EU's capacity to promote its interests and values in an increasingly challenging international environment, with growing transnational threats and global strategic competition. In this context, three strategic priorities have been agreed to enhance our capacity to 1) respond to conflicts and crises, 2) build the capacities of our partners and 3) protect the EU and its citizens. This is why the EU has been actively reinforcing its security and defence instruments and capabilities, enhancing our engagement with partners, in particular with NATO, and continuing to pursue a multilateral track to reinforce international peace and security.

In the field of defence, EU institutions and Member States have worked closely together, united in the aim to make the EU safer and stronger. Initiatives such as Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), and the European Defence Fund (EDF) can contribute towards defence cooperation and industrial consolidation, which may considerably enhance the EU's capacity to act as a security provider, its strategic autonomy and its ability to cooperate with partners. The implementation of PESCO is rapidly progressing, with 34 projects launched so far and new projects to be adopted in November 2019. The implementation of the EU Action Plan on Military Mobility is also well on track, including investment in dual-use transport infrastructure and improved cross-border movement within the EU. The European Defence Industrial Development Programme will support projects in critical fields from space and air, to sea, land and cyber-space. And from 2021 the European Defence Fund will support research and capability development and reinforce an innovative and competitive European Defence Technological and Industrial Base.

Mr. Chairman, before concluding we would like to ask our distinguished speakers to elaborate on whether and to what extent the V4 Defence Cooperation can be used as a model for other groups of states and other regions.

Finally, we once again thank our guest speakers as well as the FSC Chairmanship for providing us with the opportunity to exchange views on this interesting topic.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\* and ALBANIA\*, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

\* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.