



SEDM-CC/PMSC

*Wisdom
Cooperation
Strength!*



2021-2023

SOFIA CHAIRMANSHIP

JOINT STATEMENT

SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE DEFENCE MINISTERIAL MEETING

Sofia, 17th November 2022

We, the Ministers of Defence of the Southeastern Europe Defence Ministerial (SEDM) Process:

His Excellency Niko PELESHI, represented by Blerim ÇAKA, General Director of Defence Policy,

His Excellency Sifet PODŽIĆ, represented by the Deputy Minister of Defence Mijo KREŠIĆ,

His Excellency Dimitar STOYANOV,

His Excellency Mario BANOŽIĆ, represented by Igor GABRIĆ, Head of International Security and Defence Cooperation Sector,

His Excellency Juansher BURCHULADZE,

His Excellency Nikolaos PANAGIOTOPOULOS, represented by the Deputy Minister of Defence Nikolaos CHARDALIAS,

His Excellency Guido CROSETTO, represented by Matteo PEREGO di CREMNAGO, Undersecretary of State for Defence,

His Excellency Acting Minister of Defence Filip ADŽIĆ, represented by State Secretary Krsto PEROVIĆ,

Her Excellency Slavjanka PETROVSKA, represented by State Secretary Vladimir ANCHEV,

His Excellency Angel TÎLVĂR,

His Excellency Miloš VUČEVIĆ, represented by Assistant Minister of Defence Predrag BANDIĆ,

His Excellency Marjan ŠAREC, represented by State Secretary Rudi MEDVED,

His Excellency Hulusi AKAR, represented by Brigadier General Kubilay KOŞUCU, Deputy Director General for Defence and Security,

His Excellency Oleksii REZNIKOV, represented by Vitaly MOSKALENKO Ambassador of Ukraine to the Republic of Bulgaria,

His Excellency Lloyd J. AUSTIN III, represented by Mr. David HELVEY, from the United States Department of Defence,

His Excellency Anatolie NOSATÎ,

gathered in Sofia on the 17th of November 2022, strongly determined to promote lasting peace, stability and cooperation in the region of South-Eastern Europe (SEE) through the SEDM Process.

We thanked the Republic of Bulgaria for the hospitality and the dedication of the Ministry of Defence demonstrated in the organization of this Ministerial.

We highly appreciated the inspiring speech given by Defence Minister Dimitar STOYANOV and the opening remarks of the Chairperson of SEDM – CC/PMSC Teodora GENCHOVSKA.

We welcomed the presence of the representatives from EU, NATO, RACVIAC, SEESAC, OSCE, RCC and appreciated their valuable efforts in support of the SEDM Initiative. 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 SEDM-CC/PMSC Chairperson's report, providing an overview of the meetings, and the recent developments.

We appreciated the update provided by the Chairperson of the SEDM-CC / PMSC and fully supported her assessment of the Member States' commitment to the fundamental goals of the SEDM process to further support the political military cooperation in SEE for the sake of strengthening peace, security and stability in the region. We reaffirmed our commitment to continue promoting the importance of the SEDM process, which has proved to be a successful security-building mechanism in SEE.

We noted with satisfaction that this year's Ministerial Meeting marks the celebration of the 23th Anniversary of SEEBRIG's activation. We highlighted its importance as the practical manifestation of the commitment and contribution of the MPFSEE Nations to maintaining peace and stability in the region, since its activation in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. We expressed our appreciation to the Commander of SEEBRIG, Brigadier General Evangelos MITROUTSIKOS, for the excellent execution of "SEVEN STARS 2022" exercise.

We welcomed the report presented by COMSEEBRIG, Brigadier General Evangelos MITROUTSIKOS, on the SEEBRIG's HQ activities since the last Ministerial meeting. We commended COMSEEBRIG for his dedicated work in

enhancing the role and importance of SEEBRIG as a key element of the SEDM initiative in the promotion of peace, security, stability and cooperation in SEE.

We expressed our appreciation to Skopje for consistent SEEBRIG support and also for their efforts as a host nation for the “SEVEN STARS 2022” Exercise.

We expressed our appreciation to Athens for hosting of SEESIM-22 and its consistent efforts to develop the IMIHO project as well as Belgrade’s commitment to host the 35th IMIHO Technical Working Group meeting (IMIHO TWG) and the 17th IMIHO Users meeting in January 2023.

We appreciated Bucharest for their efforts as a lead nation in the development of the SEDM “Female Leaders in Security and Defence” (FLSD) project. We recognized the importance of the 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 encouraged all SEDM Member States to actively take part in the FLSD project in 2023.

We are grateful to Athens and Bucharest for their selfless, dedicated and excellent cooperation in developing and maintaining the SEDM portal.

We, the MPFSEE Ministers of Defence, approved the SEEBRIG's HQ Annual Plan for 2023, SEEBRIG's HQ Budget for Fiscal Year 2023 (285,000 EUR) and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2024-2027, as well as SEEBRIG's Board of Auditors assignment, based on Rotational Table, as it was endorsed during the 48th PMSC Meeting in Sofia.

We presented the national views of our countries for 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 neighborly relations.

We condemned in the strongest possible terms the Russian invasion of Ukraine, one of the SEDM member states. By its full-scale and unjustified-military aggression against Ukraine, Russia is grossly violating international law and undermining European and global security and stability. In this regard, we expressed our grave concern about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in and around the conflict-affected areas.

We condemned the recent illegal annexation of occupied regions of Ukraine as we, the SEDM member states, reiterate our unconditional commitment to the inviolability of internationally recognized borders of all states, respect of the principles of the

international law, UN Charter, Helsinki Final Act, as well as relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council, including full respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, and settling all disputes in a peaceful manner and good neighborly relations.

We expressed our unwavering determination to maintain regional peace, security and stability and noted that we must continue on the path of regional cooperation, thus contributing to international security and stability, while focusing on SEEBRIG and developing regional projects for cooperation and protection of peace and democracy.

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, to cut the lines of smuggling and human trafficking and maintain and strengthen our own regional coordination and cooperation on this issue. In this regard, as in the last Ministerial Meeting, we reiterated our understanding that it is necessary to establish peace and stability through providing a political and economic growth, and thus creating conditions for human and social development in the countries of origin.

We expressed our concern over grave security and human rights situation in conflict-affected areas and stressed the necessity for peaceful settlement of ongoing conflicts, and respect of fundamental rights of internally displaced persons and refugees to safe and dignified return to their homes.

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 support and commitment to the efforts of the international community to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including through concerted regional cooperation.

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

We continue to support the “open door policy” for the states which are willing to join the SEDM process and further strengthen the regional cooperation through SEDM’s crucial regional role.

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

We expressed our gratitude to Minister of Defence Dimitar STOYANOV and Sofia SEDM-CC/PMSC Chairmanship for their efforts to plan and successfully conduct the SEDM Ministerial Meeting in 2022.

We confirmed that the next Ministerial Meeting will be hosted by Ankara in 2023 in accordance with the agreed schedule.

TEODORA GENCHOVSKA
SEDM-CC/PMSC Chairperson