

## LONG TERM VISION OF THE VISEGRAD COUNTRIES ON DEEPENING THEIR DEFENCE COOPERATION (Visegrad, 14 March 2014)

As members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union our nations enjoy unprecedented security today. At the same time, as a consequence of changes of extraordinary dynamics and magnitude in the global security environment, Europe has to increase its contribution to enhancing its own security. This challenge should be undertaken in a period when the gap between the defence capabilities and defence budgets of the United States and of European nations is growing, while the security environment in Europe's neighbourhood has become more fragile, and new types of security challenges are emerging.

In order to adapt to the new circumstances and meet these security challenges, it is crucial for all European Allies and EU member states to spend their defence budgets more efficiently and strengthen their defence cooperation as much as possible. Regional cooperation has an added value and an important contribution to make. Recognising this, we set the objective to strengthen European and transatlantic capabilities by deepening our defence cooperation, modernizing our armed forces and better using our available resources by eliminating unnecessary duplications while respecting the national sovereignty of each participating state. We also commit ourselves to at least maintain and once economic situation makes it possible, increase our defence spending in order to better align with the resource guideline in NATO's Political Guidance. Meeting these objectives requires a long term vision for both political and practical cooperation.

The practical cooperation shall focus mainly but not exclusively on three critical areas: 1) capability development, procurement and defence industry; 2) the establishment of multinational units and running cross border activities; 3) education, training and exercises.

- 1) Capability development and procurement remain critical areas of cooperation. Focus should be on the long term planning horizon as it will provide the time and flexibility to achieve convergence of V4 countries' defence plans. We should conduct a deep analysis on defence capabilities assessing the sustainability of our forces, and the most significant capability gaps. Close cooperation needs increased transparency, and the harmonization of defence and procurement plans. Besides strengthening our defence planning cooperation harmonized with NATO's Defence Planning Process, we should pay due attention to Framework Nations Concept and its linkage to NATO's Force Structure. We should also fully exploit possibilities offered by other multinational solutions in the framework of NATO (Smart Defence) and the EU (Pooling&Sharing).

In case of major acquisitions it should be a general rule for us to first examine the possibility of a common or coordinated procurement, be it in quadrilateral, bilateral or trilateral formations. We must capitalize on the fact that the legacy military equipment at our disposal has to be replaced nearly at the same time. Mechanisms of NATO Support Agency and the European Defence Agency should be exploited.

In this endeavour V4 defence industry should be involved as actively as possible preventing our region from turning into a mere market for global defence companies, and promoting it to become an integral part of the European defence industrial base. We

should consider supporting our defence companies to form consortia in order to produce and sell certain products together. While deepening our cooperation, we should also build on ongoing projects and identify and develop niche capabilities where we have recognized competences.

- 2) The establishment of multinational units provides the highest visibility and greatest political benefits. Based on our NATO and EU commitments, we shall strive to establish a regional, modular force that can be regularly offered to NATO and the EU or used outside these frameworks when necessary. This force could become a real multiplier in our military inventories. The V4 EU Battlegroup, scheduled for stand-by in the first half of 2016, constitutes a solid basis to this end. The Battlegroup should be turned into a basis for more permanent cooperation, building on lessons learned achieved during its preparatory phase. The establishment of the Battlegroup serves as a driving force for enhancing V4 cooperation. Possibilities of running cross borders activities (e.g. common air policing) should also be examined.
- 3) Strengthening interoperability is best served by cooperation in the fields of education, training, and exercises. The Visegrad Group Military Educational Program (VIGMILEP) should provide a suitable framework for increased cooperation of V4 institutions of defence education, and the harmonization of their activities. We are committed to organize a common V4 military exercise annually which is a Visegrad contribution to implementing NATO's Connected Forces Initiative. To this end we shall elaborate a V4 Training and Exercise Strategy.

To support the implementation of the objectives set in this document, multi-year Action Plan will be elaborated and will provide description of concrete joint projects and initiatives that are either under way or being considered or are worth exploring for the future as well as target dates for their accomplishment if applicable. Progress on these tasks would be annually presented to the Ministers of Defence. The Action Plan shall be a living document subject to regular updates as specific action plan items are further developed or new items are added. In principle, the Action Plan shall serve as guidance for each V4 presidency. The plan will be reviewed by a senior body on the level of State Secretaries / Defence Policy Directors.

The senior body shall provide strategic guidance recommendations, identify areas of common interest and oversee launching of concrete common projects. It will meet regularly to assess the achieved progress and recommend the next steps to the Ministers. It will also be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the V4 defence cooperation.

Regular harmonization of positions on relevant defence policy and planning issues should continue and become an important element of the cooperation among our countries. The topic of defence policy and defence cooperation should remain on the highest political agenda. This must be complemented with efficient public diplomacy and strategic communication to raise the V4 profile both within our countries and in the eyes of our international partners. Besides consultations among high-level policy-makers direct contacts should be strengthened among relevant subject matter experts in order to foster efficient cooperation.

All four Visegrad countries should benefit from the deepening of the cooperation, thus increasing the cohesion of the V4 group. The Visegrad Group remains open to cooperation



with third states or groups of states. Common projects are envisioned mostly with the involvement of countries from our wider region.

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