



**JOINT STATEMENT
BY THE DEFENCE MINISTERS OF THE BUCHAREST 9**

Warsaw, 26th April 2023

1. We, the Defence Ministers of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and the Slovak Republic, met in the “Bucharest Nine” format, with an aim to consult and cooperate on the current security threats and challenges for the Eastern Flank of the Alliance and the Euro-Atlantic area.
2. We condemn Russia’s unjustified, unprovoked and brutal war of aggression against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. Kremlin’s actions led to a drastic degradation of the security environment in the Euro-Atlantic area, also gravely deteriorating the security of our partners. Ukraine’s civilian death toll is surging due to Russia’s indiscriminate missile strikes and deliberate attacks on critical infrastructure. Those responsible for war crimes should be held accountable. We also condemn all those, including Belarus regime, who are actively facilitating Russia’s war against Ukraine.
3. In the face of this aggression against Ukraine, we reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We stress the need to remain united on the need to maintain and enhance the political and practical support for Ukraine, and call all members of NATO, the EU and “like minded” partners to further contribute to this crucial and urgent effort. This should include existing mechanisms. In this context, we recall the latest relevant decision regarding the European Peace Facility which makes it possible to provide, in a joint effort and based on national decisions, 1 million rounds of artillery ammunition to Ukraine and deliver it within next 12 months. There is also a need for enhanced joint financing and procurement mechanisms to support Ukraine, based on national decision, and backfill nations which have donated capabilities. Having this in mind we also need more capable defence industry to significantly increase production and stockpiles of decisive systems and munition.
4. We are fully convinced that Ukraine’s future lies in Europe. We firmly support Ukraine’s European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations and will continue to assist Ukraine in preparing for membership in both NATO and the EU. While noting the EU decision to grant Ukraine candidate status made last year, we note that the Allies may discuss Ukraine’s future membership in NATO at the Vilnius Summit.

5. Reaffirming our commitment to the Open Door policy, in Madrid NATO invited Finland and Sweden to join the Alliance. Welcoming Finland among the Allies, we also look forward to Sweden becoming full NATO Member soon. This will strengthen allied collective security.
6. Russia is the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. We welcomed that, in response to Russia's war of aggression, Allies reacted decisively in a united and responsible manner to protect NATO's populations and territory. The Alliance is committed to implementing the new baseline for its deterrence and forward defence posture and to enhancing Allied military presence in the Eastern Flank, from the Baltic to the Black Sea.
7. We support timely implementation of the Madrid Summit decisions on forward defences with robust in-place, multi-domain, combat-ready forces, enhanced C2 arrangements, air defence, prepositioned equipment and stocks that assure improved, rapidly available reinforcement. All this would lead to regional defence plans that are credible and capable of denying any potential adversary of any possible opportunity for aggression.
8. The Vilnius Summit should further enhance security of all Allies, including those in the Eastern Flank. We count that the summit will bring solid and concrete solutions to deter Russia's military threat, particularly regarding further strengthening NATO posture, implementation of the new force model, improved executable NATO's defence plans, command and control arrangements, and a rotational model for the Integrated Air and Missile Defence. NATO is a defensive Alliance, and its Article 5 commitment to defend each other stands as the backbone of Euro-Atlantic security. We support a 360-degree approach, and contribute to security of all Allies, regarding challenges and threats from all directions. In particular, we condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.
9. The implementation of the above decisions will require adequate resourcing both on national level and from the NATO's common budgets. A number of the B9 countries invest 2,5% or more of GDP in defence. Therefore, we support the NATO Secretary General's idea to agree the renewed Defence Investment Pledge post 2024 during the Summit in Vilnius.
10. We stand ready to support the consolidation of defence capacities of the partners from the immediate vicinity; in particular the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina; that are most at risk of Kremlin's destabilizing and malign influence.
11. We agree that the current security situation calls for complementary and effective EU-NATO cooperation, including in support of the Alliance deterrence and defence.
12. The B9 Defence Ministers stood united demonstrating the unity of NATO's Eastern Flank countries.