



## **Bratislava Declaration of Visegrad Group Heads of Government**

### **Deepening V4 Defence Cooperation**

We, the Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, recognise that current security trends call for closer regional defence cooperation. We are committed to enhance our defence cooperation based on the Long Term Vision adopted in March 2014. The Action Plan, currently being drafted under the Slovak Presidency, will outline concrete steps toward this aim. We will also continue with coordination of national positions on current NATO and EU security topics.

Marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the peaceful political transition to democracy in the Visegrad Group countries, we reaffirm our commitment to security and stability in our region and Europe as a whole. The illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, ongoing Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine as well as provocative activities along the eastern border of NATO have profoundly challenged the security architecture in our region and demonstrated that inter-state conventional conflict at the Alliance's borders is still a possible scenario. The Visegrad Group countries reaffirm their commitment to international law, including the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries. In this regard, V4 countries will coordinate their national positions to maximise the efforts to support Ukraine.

We acknowledge the significance of the issues addressed at the NATO Summit in Wales. We welcome the adoption of NATO Readiness Action Plan as a comprehensive package, which will help us enhance our responsiveness to the security challenges on NATO's frontiers. In this regard, we recognise the increasing importance of Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE). It should serve as a hub for NATO collective defence activities in our region. All decisions taken in Newport must be fully and swiftly implemented. The process needs to be completed until the Summit in Warsaw in 2016.

Solidarity among the Allies is the key principle. We are committed to a fair and balanced sharing of responsibilities. All countries of the Visegrad Group pledged to increase their defence expenditures. Moreover, all countries of the Visegrad Group have contributed to Assurance Measures in order to support the frontline Allies and to reiterate our commitment to collective defence. Among these measures was the exercise GROUND PEPPER 2014 hosted by Slovakia with the participation of V4 and US troops. Strong and stable transatlantic partnership continues to be in our vital interest.

The Visegrad Group reaffirms its commitment to work towards more effective Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU. We will coordinate our positions toward the next European Council in June 2015, which should take stock of the December 2013 European Council conclusions, and provide further political guidance. We must reflect on the security challenges in our immediate neighbourhood in close and mutually reinforced cooperation of the EU and NATO.

We will continue with preparations of the V4 EU Battlegroup to be on standby in the first semester of 2016 with participation of Ukraine. We hereby endorse the achieved results and, in particular, welcome NATO's decision to link the V4 EU BG certification exercise COMMON CHALLENGE 2015 with NATO high visibility exercise TRIDENT JUNCTURE 2015.

In our statement from June 2014, we tasked the Defence Ministers to explore the possibilities of forming a permanent V4 modular force in order to contribute to NATO and EU Rapid Reaction Forces as well as to crisis management operations. In line with this task, we welcome the Polish initiative to form another V4 EU Battlegroup in the second semester of 2019. This is also in line with our tasking to the Defence Ministers from June 2014: to explore the possibilities of forming a permanent V4 modular force in order to contribute to NATO and EU Rapid Reaction Forces as well as to crisis management operations. We expect to continue to work on this long-term objective. Providing regular contributions to international rapid response formations will make the Visegrad brand more credible and visible.

In order to enhance the visibility, credibility and interoperability of our Armed Forces, the Visegrad Group countries will deepen cooperation in training and exercises. Slovakia hosted the first common V4 exercise GROUND PEPPER 2014 in line with the commitment to organise annual V4 military exercises. Future cooperation will be framed by the V4 Training and Exercise Strategy, which will be prepared during the Slovak Presidency.

To further enhance V4 defence cooperation, we task our Ministers of Defence to:

- seek common V4 solutions to meet the commitments made at the NATO Summit in Wales, particularly focusing on the NATO Readiness Action Plan,
- work further on establishing the permanent V4 modular force for NATO and EU rapid response formations as well as operations.

We look forward to the next NATO Summit, which will be held in Warsaw in 2016. We should seize this opportunity and present tangible results of our regional cooperation to Allies.

We, the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad countries, are convinced that the implementation of our tasking from June 2014 is on the right track. We task the V4 Ministers of Defence to report on the achieved progress at the end of the Slovak Presidency.