

**JOINT DECLARATION
OF THE HEADS OF STATE BUCHAREST 9 MEETING
(Bucharest, the 10th of May 2021)**

1. We, the Presidents of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania and the Slovak Republic, met virtually today, in the *Bucharest 9* platform for consultation and dialogue. We warmly welcome the participation today of the President of the United States of America, Joseph Biden, and the NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg.
2. We have discussed security developments in the Euro-Atlantic area, including in our neighbourhood. This was an excellent opportunity to reiterate, ahead of the upcoming NATO Summit, our commitment to make a strong NATO even stronger. In a context of evolving challenges and threats, NATO remains the bedrock of Euro-Atlantic stability and security. We have shared our views on the way forward for NATO to 2030 and beyond.
3. We reaffirm our continued determination for a strong and enduring transatlantic bond, based on Allied unity and solidarity, which remains the foundation of our collective defence, as enshrined in the Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. The role of the United States of America for Europe's security is indispensable. We, as NATO Allies, sharing the same democratic values and principles, will continue to work together to the benefit of Euro-Atlantic security and of that of our citizens. We stand ready to foster equitable burden sharing in full accordance with the commitments undertaken in the Defence Investment Pledge. The upcoming NATO Summit will lay the path towards a new chapter in transatlantic relations.
4. NATO is facing distinct threats and challenges emanating from all strategic directions. Russia's aggressive actions and military build-up in the immediate vicinity of NATO, including the recent escalation in the Black Sea, on Ukraine's borders and in the illegally annexed Crimea, as well as its aggressive hybrid activities, continue to threaten the Euro-Atlantic security and challenge the rules-based international order.

We condemn Russia's acts of sabotage on Alliance territory as evidenced in the explosions of the ammunition depot in 2014 in Vrbětice, in the Czech Republic, that constitute a grave violation of international law. In addition, we express concern over reports of a similar pattern of behaviour on the territory of Bulgaria, as evidenced by the announcement on the ongoing investigation in Sofia. We stand in full solidarity with our Allies, the Czech Republic and the Republic of Bulgaria.

Terrorism remains a threat to us all. Hybrid warfare, disinformation and deceit aim at sowing distrust in our societies, with the ultimate goal of affecting the very pillars of our democracies and undermining our unity. Instability beyond our borders is also contributing to irregular migration. We remain vigilant, within the Alliance, that Afghanistan will not become again a safe haven for terrorists.

5. Since 2014, NATO has taken decisive steps to undergo a substantive process of adaptation to a new geopolitical reality, focusing on its core task of collective defence. These steps were further strengthened, particularly by the 2016 Warsaw and 2018 Brussels Summits decisions, such as NATO's forward presence from the Baltic to the Black Sea and NATO Readiness Initiative, which are the expression of allied unity and solidarity. In this context, we welcome the NATO Readiness Initiative brigades led by Poland and Romania and Bulgaria's proposal to host the NATO Regional Maritime Coordination Presence for the Black Sea.

As these measures remain valid and should be fully implemented, in response to the evolving security situation we continue to adapt and further strengthen our ability to deter and defend. While we continue to ensure our deterrence and defence posture, NATO remains open to periodic, focused and meaningful dialogue, and to a constructive relationship with Russia when Russia's actions make that possible.

6. We commend the leadership of NATO Secretary General on the NATO 2030 process, addressing ways to respond to complex security challenges in a 360 degree approach, thus setting a clear direction for the future of the Alliance, including through launching work on updating the NATO Strategic Concept.
7. We support and expect substantive and forward-looking decisions at the upcoming NATO Summit. We endorse the recently adopted strategic military concepts for strengthening deterrence and defence of our Alliance and commit to their full implementation. In this context, allies should commit to modernizing the NATO Force Structure as essential for building a reinforced NATO deterrence and defence architecture.
8. The global rise of China has implications on Euro-Atlantic security and we have to address them together, as an Alliance.

9. Evolving challenges to security and to our societies, stemming from exploiting systemic vulnerabilities and weaponizing new technologies, require strengthened resilience efforts at national and Allied level as underscored including by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We need to continue these endeavours and we welcome all initiatives devoted to them, such as the Euro-Atlantic Centre for Resilience to be launched by Romania, as well as the work of the dedicated Centres of Excellence in Riga, Tallinn and Vilnius.
10. We reiterate our commitment to NATO Open Door policy, as reflected in the Article 10 of the Washington Treaty. The decision taken at the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest stands. NATO's door should remain open to all willing and able to join our community. We encourage those partners who aspire to join the Alliance to continue to implement the necessary reforms and decisions to prepare for membership, based on democratic values, respect for rule of law, human rights, and full compliance with their respective international commitments and obligations. In this regard, we will continue to support their efforts.
11. We will continue working with our like-minded partners, especially in our neighbourhood, to deepen dialogue, practical cooperation and assistance for their growing resilience. We remain committed to the security and stability in the Western Balkans. We also reaffirm our firm support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, within their internationally recognised borders. While pursuing their respective European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations, these countries will continue to benefit as well from our support in their efforts to strengthen their resilience against any external interference.
12. The cooperation between NATO and the EU has considerably developed and is essential in face of the common security challenges. As NATO Allies and EU Member States, we support a strategic partnership and deeper coordination between NATO and the EU. In this regard, we will seek the combined potential of the two organizations, including to increase Euro-Atlantic resilience, counter hybrid threats, improve cyber security and achieve greater synergy of actions.
13. We will continue our efforts aimed at making NATO more efficient and stronger and we are ready to bring our contribution to the benefit of transatlantic security. We remain committed to continue meeting in the *Bucharest 9*, platform for consultation and dialogue, as a means to promote joint approaches and contribute to Euro-Atlantic security.