



SEDM-CC/PMSC



Power through unity!

**2019-2021
Albanian Chairmanship**



JOINT STATEMENT

SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE DEFENCE MINISTERIAL MEETING

Athens, 14th October 2020

(Via Video Teleconference)



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

Her Excellency, Mrs. Olta XHAÇKA, represented by Mr. Florian KALI, Defence Policy Director,

His Excellency, Mr. Sifet PODŽIĆ, represented by Mr. Mijo KREŠIĆ, Deputy Minister for Policy and Plans,

His Excellency, Mr. Krasimir KARAKACHANOV, represented by Lieutenant General (ret.) Atanas ZAPRYANOV, Deputy Minister of Defence,

His Excellency, Mr. Mario BANOŽIĆ, represented by Mrs. Dunja BUJAN, Acting Defence Policy Director,

His Excellency, Mr. Irakli GARIBASHVILI, represented by Mrs. Lela CHIKOVANI, First Deputy Minister of Defence,

His Excellency, Mr. Nikolaos PANAGIOTOPOULOS, represented by Mr. Alkiviadis STEFANIS, Deputy Minister of National Defence,

His Excellency, Mr. Lorenzo GUERINI, represented by Major General Giovanni M. IANNUCCI, Italian Defence General Staff, Policy and Planning Division Head,



His Excellency, Mr. Predrag BOŠKOVIĆ, represented by Major General Rajko PEŠIĆ, Director General of Directorate for Defence Policy and Planning,

Her Excellency, Mrs. Radmila SHEKERINSKA, represented by Mr. Bashkim HASANI, Deputy Minister of Defence,



His Excellency, Mr. Nicolae-Ionel CIUCĂ, represented by Mrs. Simona COJOCARU, State Secretary and Chief of the Department for Defence Policy, Planning and International Relations,

His Excellency, Mr. Matej TONIN, represented by Mr. Uroš LAMPRET, State Secretary,

His Excellency, Mr. Hulusi AKAR, represented by Mr. Yunus Emre KARAOSMANOĞLU, Deputy Minister of National Defence,

His Excellency, Mr. Andrii TARAN, represented by Mr. Yurii PUNDA, Director General of Directorate for Defence Policy.

convened, on 14th October 2020, via Video Teleconference, strongly determined to promote lasting peace, stability and security in the region of South-Eastern Europe (SEE) through the SEDM Process.

We highly appreciated the opening remarks by the Chairman of SEDM-CC/PMSC, His Excellency Mr. Petro KOÇI and the welcome address and the inspiring key note speech by the Deputy Minister of National Defence of Greece, His Excellency Mr. Alkiviadis STEFANIS.

We expressed our appreciation to the Chairman of SEDM-CC/PMSC and welcomed the achievements during the Albanian Chairmanship in enriching SEDM Projects and for the valuable contribution in promoting the goals of SEDM process.

We appreciated the considerable efforts performed by Athens, as SEDM Portal Host Nation, to provide a secure dedicated Video Teleconference service at no cost for all SEDM Member Nations, through which important SEDM Meetings, including the current Ministerial one, were successfully planned and executed.

We welcomed the presence of the representatives from the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), RACVIAC - Centre for Security

Cooperation and South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (UNDP SEESAC).

We noted with concern the challenges posed by the current global COVID-19 pandemic over the last months, causing an unprecedented crisis with massive social repercussions, loss of lives and a severe shock to economies around the world. We expressed our condolences to all those who have lost loved ones and our deepest sympathies to all the victims and those affected.

We appreciated the role that our Armed/Defence Forces played in our nations and the commitment they showed to do their part in mitigating the impact of the spreading coronavirus early in 2020. We reaffirmed that the military capabilities in the COVID-19 crisis have proven extremely important in the civilian efforts to fight the pandemic, providing vital support to relevant authorities and helping to save lives and stem the spread and impact of the pandemic. We expressed appreciation that our Armed/Defence Forces are ready to support efforts for managing not only a potential second wave of the virus across populations, but also to increase readiness to counter future pandemics.

We noted with satisfaction the achievements obtained within the SEDM process as presented by the Chairman of the SEDM-CC/PMSC in his update and the way ahead.

We welcomed the Chairman's report in which he provided a summary of the activities of the Chairmanship on priority issues since the last South-Eastern Europe Defence Ministerial Meeting in Bucharest, on 16th of October 2019.

We fully supported the assessment of the Chairman of SEDM-CC/PMSC, emphasizing that the commitment of Member Nations to the fundamental goals of the SEDM Process to further enhance the political-military cooperation in SEE should be sustained with a view to strengthening peace, security and stability in the region. We reaffirmed our commitment to continue promoting the relevance of the SEDM process, which has proved to be a successful security building mechanism in South-Eastern Europe.

We noted the update by the Chairman of SEDM-CC/PMSC regarding the ratification procedures taken by the member states for the 6th Additional Protocol of the MPFSEE Agreement, signed on 12th of June 2019 in Skopje, as this document adapts the needs in the face of newly emerged circumstances and the security environment, while still

adhering to the scope of its agreed operational framework.

We noted with satisfaction that this year marked the milestone of the relocation of SEEBRIG HQ from Tyrnavos to Kumanovo, the Hand Over-Take Over of the Command of SEEBRIG and the 21st Anniversary of SEEBRIG. We also acknowledged SEEBRIG's HQ contribution to regional security and stability, having turned into a unique platform for military cooperation, mutual training, exchanging of experiences and producing of lessons learned.

We expressed our appreciation to Athens for the strong and longstanding support given by the Greek civilian and military authorities to SEEBRIG HQ since 2011 and we conveyed our appreciation for the outstanding efforts made by Skopje in hosting SEEBRIG HQ for the next 6 years.



We expressed deepest appreciation to the former COMSEEBRIG, Brigadier General Tudorică PETRACHE for his tireless efforts to provide the most qualified and professional standards of all SEEBRIG's activities and for the outstanding work to further ensure the success story of SEEBRIG. We expressed our confidence that COMSEEBRIG, Brigadier General Aristeidis ILIOPOULOS and his staff will continue the efforts to reach great achievements and wish him every success in his tour of duty.

We welcomed the report of COMSEEBRIG, Brigadier General Aristeidis ILIOPOULOS concerning the SEEBRIG HQ activities since the last SEDM Meeting. We expressed our appreciation to COMSEEBRIG for his hard work to enhance the effectiveness of SEEBRIG as the most important element of the SEDM initiative to actively contribute to peace, security, stability and cooperation in SEE.

We, the MPFSEE Ministers of Defence, approved the SEEBRIG's Annual Plan for 2021, SEEBRIG's Budget for the Fiscal Year 2021, (275,610 EURO) and Medium Term Financial Plan 2021-2023, as well as COMSEEBRIG's authorization to re-locate up to 20% among chapters of the approved 2021 Budget.

We, the MPFSEE Ministers of Defence, approved the Board of Auditors to be rescheduled for 2021, when Property Accounts audit will be conducted simultaneously with the Financial Accounts audit, by an enhanced Board of Auditors, consisting of members from Nations 1, 2, 6 and 7, following a combination of the Board of Auditors rotational table

for the years 2020 and 2021.



We appreciated Athens' efforts to further develop the "Interconnection of the Military Hospitals" (IMIHO) project utilizing internet based technologies in order to allow health care personnel to organize and participate in online seminars, in an accessible and cost-effective way. We also approved the "Military Medical Metrics" Proposal that aims at collecting, analyzing and sharing performance metrics related to medical activities, in order to produce actionable conclusions regarding efficiency and effectiveness of Hospitals, while taking into account security concerns and protection of personal information.

We approved the SEDM Portal Hosting Proposal, which is a long-term, viable and cost-effective solution for ensuring hosting of the SEDM information systems and providing uninterrupted online services to authorized personnel and visitors. We expressed our appreciation to the SEDM Portal Technical Working Group, for their contribution and continuous support to help us work together effectively, share our views, thoughts and ideas using the SEDM Portal. We also expressed our appreciation to Bucharest for their readiness to host the SEDM Portal for a three-year period.

We expressed our appreciation to Bucharest for their availability to host the "Female Leaders in Security and Defence" Conference, via VTC, on the first week of November 2020, as an important year of celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the UNSCR 1325 and to Rome that offered itself as lead nation for the SEDM Project "Female Leaders in Security and Defence" in 2021. In the same vein, we encouraged SEDM Member Nations to assume the leadership of the "Building Integrity in Defence" project in order to further promote transparent institutions by implementing the principles of integrity, transparency and accountability.

We appreciated Athens and all participating SEDM Member Nations for their efforts to explore all possible options to plan and execute SEESIM-20 Exercise, whose execution has been postponed to 2022 due to the COVID-19 outbreak. We emphasized that SEESIM is a valuable tool for promoting cooperation and interoperability among participants, which should be supported by all SEDM Member Nations.

We, the SEDM Ministers of Defence, appreciated the entering into force of the "Agreement on the Coordination Committee in the Framework of Southeastern Europe Defence Ministerial Process" on the 2nd June 2020, signed in Sofia, on the 21st October 2009.



Through the presentations of our national views on the way ahead, we reaffirmed our commitment to strengthening political and military cooperation in SEE to support and enhance regional security, stability, good neighborly relations and to contribute to preventing deterioration of security and strengthening the defense architecture.



We reiterated our unwavering commitment to international law, treaties and agreements, the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act, including full respect of sovereignty, sovereign rights and territorial integrity of all states, peaceful settlement of disputes, good neighborly relations and refraining from the threat or use of force.

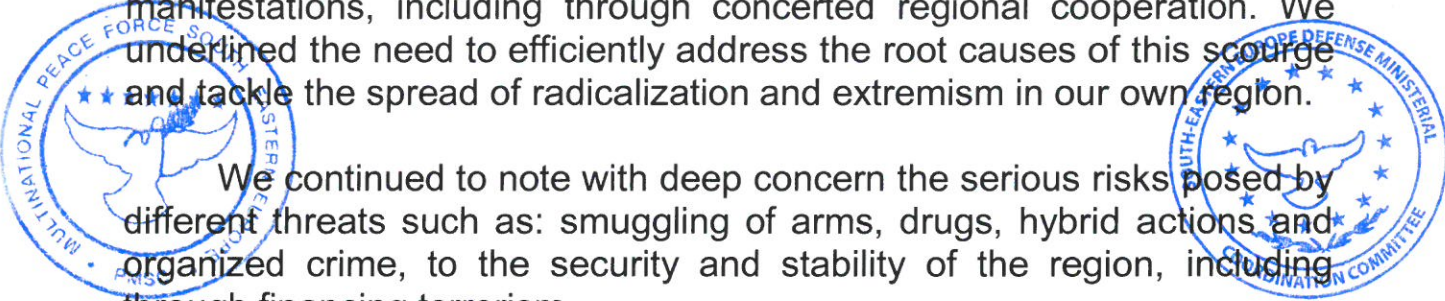
We also expressed our concern over grave security and human rights situation in conflict-affected areas and stressed the necessity for peaceful settlement of ongoing and protracted conflicts, and respect of fundamental rights of Internally Displaced People and refugees to safe and dignified return to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

We underlined our commitment to regional peace and stability and we noted that we should continue on the path of the regional cooperation, as a path to international security and stability, focusing on SEEBRIG and developing the regional projects for cooperation and protection of peace and democracy in the region.

We continued to note with concern the common security challenges that the refugee flows and the ongoing migration pose to our region and reaffirmed our commitment to support and complement the efforts of the international community, within the UN legal framework, to cut the lines of smuggling and human trafficking and to maintain and strengthen our own regional coordination and cooperation on this issue.

We reiterated that bringing peace and stability, providing a sustainable economic growth and thus creating conditions for human and social development in the countries of origin will encourage their people to seek their future in their homelands. We reconfirmed our commitment to contribute to peace and confidence and to foster good neighborly relations by working closely with all states in SEE.

We noted that the security threats are not diminished because of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and 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 underlined the need to efficiently address the root causes of this scourge and tackle the spread of radicalization and extremism in our own region.

We continued to note with deep concern the serious risks posed by different threats such as: smuggling of arms, drugs, hybrid actions and organized crime, to the security and stability of the region, including through financing terrorism.

We reaffirmed our determination to pursue the integration into the European and Euro-Atlantic communities of the aspirant countries from SEE, emphasizing the fact that SEDM has always been an instrument of growth, cohesion and union, as well as a support instrument for the region towards its Euro-Atlantic integration, and we expressed our congratulation to the Republic of North Macedonia for joining NATO on 27th March 2020 as thirtieth member. We also welcomed efforts of aspirant countries towards European and Euro-Atlantic Institutions.

We reaffirmed our dedication to the 'open door policy' for the aspirant states which want to be part of the SEDM initiative and whose participation could help mitigate the SEEBRIG's recognized shortfalls and capability gaps.

We, the MPFSEE Ministers of Defence, reiterated our expectation that Sarajevo finalize their national procedure for the ratification of MPFSEE Agreement, in order to greet Sarajevo as a new member and underlined that the membership of Sarajevo in the MPFSEE will make an important contribution to SEEBRIG.

We appreciated the consistent efforts of Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), of RACVIAC – Center for Security Cooperation and South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (UNDP SEESAC) in further fostering the dialogue and enhancing the regional cooperation on security matters in South Eastern Europe as well as supporting European and Euro-Atlantic integration in SEE.

We conveyed our appreciation and gratitude to Athens and particularly to H.E. Mr. Alkiviadis STEFANIS, to Athens officials, to SEDM Portal Technical Working Group and to SEDM-CC/PMSC Albanian Chairmanship for their efforts in successfully preparing and conducting the annual SEDM Ministerial Meeting.

We confirmed that the next Ministerial Meeting will be hosted by Skopje in October 2021, according to the meeting calendar.

H.E. Mr. Petro KOÇI
SEDM-CC/PMSC Chairman

