



SEDM-CC/PMSC

Wisdom
Cooperation
Strength!



2021-2023
SOFIA CHAIRMANSHIP

JOINT STATEMENT

SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE DEFENSE MINISTERIAL MEETING

Skopje, 4th November 2021



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

His Excellency Niko PELESHI,

His Excellency Sifet PODŽIĆ,

His Excellency Georgi PANAYOTOV, represented by Brigadier General Radostin ILIEV, Defense Policy and Planning Director,

His Excellency Mario BANOŽIĆ, represented by State Secretary Zdravko Jakop,

His Excellency Juansher BURCHULADZE, represented by Ambassador Tamuna LILUASHVILI,

His Excellency Nikolaos PANAGIOTOPOULOS, represented by
Ambassador Roussos KOUNDOUROS,

His Excellency Lorenzo GUERINI, represented by Ambassador Andrea
SILVESTRI,

Her Excellency Olivera INJAC,

Her Excellency Radmila SHEKERINSKA,



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

His Excellency Nebojša STEFANOVIĆ, represented by Acting Assistant Minister
for Defense Predrag BANDIĆ,

His Excellency Matej TONIN,

His Excellency Hulusi AKAR, represented by Rear Admiral Özgür Özcan
ALTUNBULAK, Director General Defense and Security Directorate,

His Excellency Andrii TARAN, represented by Yurii PUNDA, General Director of
the Directorate of Defense Policy,

gathered in Skopje on the 4th of November 2021, strongly determined to promote lasting peace, stability and cooperation in the region of South-Eastern Europe (SEE) through the SEDM Process.

We appreciated the hospitality of the Republic of North Macedonia and the dedication of the Ministry of Defense demonstrated in the organization of this Ministerial.



We highly appreciated the inspiring speech given by Defense Minister Radmila SHEKERINSKA and the opening remarks of the Chairman of SEDM – CC/PMSC Plamen YORDANOV.

We congratulated Plamen YORDANOV and Sofia for taking the rotational chairmanship, as we believe they will continue enriching the SEDM Projects and promote the goals of the SEDM Process.

We welcomed the presence of the representatives from the EU, RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation and the United Nations Development Programme's South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms (UNDP SEESAC).

We highlighted the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has been posing for the last 20 months, creating an unparalleled situation across the globe that negatively affected people's lives, state economies and governments, thus creating

an unprecedented crisis. We expressed our condolences to all those who have lost loved ones and our deepest sympathies to all the victims and those affected.

We acknowledged the role and commitment of the Armed Forces of our nations in assisting the mitigation of the impact caused by the COVID-19 crisis. Our Armed/Defense Forces demonstrated the readiness and capability to help the civilians and the relevant public authorities in times of crisis.



We welcomed the SEDM-CC/PMSC Chairman's report, providing an overview of the meetings, the recent developments and the way ahead.

We appreciated the update provided by the Chairman of the SEDM-CC / PMSC and fully supported his assessments of the Member States' commitment to the fundamental goals of the SEDM process to further support the political military cooperation in SEE for the sake of strengthening peace, security and stability in the region. We reaffirmed our commitment to continue to promote the importance of the SEDM process, which has proved to be a successful security-building mechanism in SEE.

We noted with satisfaction that this year's Ministerial Meeting marks the celebration of the 22nd Anniversary of SEEBRIG's activation. We highlighted its importance as the practical manifestation of the commitment and contribution of the MPFSEE Nations to maintaining peace and stability in the region, since its activation in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. We expressed our appreciation to the Commander of

SEEBRIG, Brigadier General Aristeidis ILIOPOULOS, for the excellent organization of the ceremony for the 22nd Anniversary of SEEBRIG's activation combined with the ceremony of Handover-Takeover of SEDM Secretariat between Tirana and Sofia, held in August 2021 in Kumanovo and for his remarkable input to SEEBRIG's activities and development.



We welcomed the report presented by COMSEEBRIG, Brigadier General Aristeidis ILIOPOULOS, on the SEEBRIG's HQ activities since the last Ministerial meeting (Athens, 14 Oct 20). We commended COMSEEBRIG for his dedicated work in enhancing the role and importance of SEEBRIG as a key element of the SEDM initiative in the promotion of peace, security, stability and cooperation in SEE.

We expressed our appreciation to Athens for the consistent efforts to develop the IMIHO program and Bucharest's commitment to host the 33rd IMIHO Technical Working Group meeting (IMIHO TWG) and the 15th IMIHO Users meeting in online format in December 2021. Practice has shown that the use of Internet-based technologies allows healthcare professionals to organize and participate in online seminars in an affordable and cost-effective way in the conditions of an epidemiological crisis. Same is valid for Athens efforts to host SEESIM 22 exercise, since SEESIM 20 exercise was postponed due to the COVID-19 crisis.

We appreciated Rome for their efforts as a lead nation in the development of the SEDM “Women Leaders in Security and Defense” (FLSD) project. We recognized the importance of the initiative for the development and diversification of human resources, as well as for the further integration of women in the national and international defense structures and in the member states’ national Armed Forces. We highlighted two online FLSD international conferences hosted by Bucharest in November 2020 and Rome in October 2021. We encouraged all SEDM Member States to actively take part in the FLSD project in the year 2022.



We are grateful to Athens and Bucharest for their selfless, dedicated and useful cooperation in developing and maintaining the SEDM portal and the successful server migration.

We noted the importance of the "Building Integrity in Defense" project, which proved to be an useful tool to assist countries in fighting corruption in the defense and security sector. Accordingly, NATO BI tailored Program for SEE countries exemplifies collaboration, mutual complementarity and synergy of efforts. Constructive dialogue should prevail in the collaboration between SEDM and NATO in the process of developing capabilities in a time of severe financial constraints.

We, the MPFSEE Ministers of Defense, approved the SEEBRIG’s HQ Annual Plan for 2022, SEEBRIG’s HQ Budget for Fiscal Year 2022 (262,500 EUR)

and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2022-2024, Action Plan regarding the SEEBRIG's Board of Auditors recommendation, as well as SEEBRIG's Board of Auditors assignment, based on Rotational Table, as it was endorsed during the 46th PMSC Meeting in Sofia.

We approved the Online Military Medical Services proposal.

We presented the national views of our countries for the way ahead. We reaffirmed our commitment to encouraging political and military cooperation in SEE in order to strengthen regional security and stability that results in fostering good neighborly relations.

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

We also expressed our concern over grave security and human right 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 expressed our unwavering determination to maintain regional peace, security and stability and noted that we must continue on the path of regional



cooperation, thus contributing to international security and stability, while focusing on SEEBRIG and developing regional projects for cooperation and protection of peace and democracy.



We noted with concern the existence of common security threats and challenges. Both global, such as the deterioration of the security environment in the world, climate change and the COVID crisis as well as regional ones, such as military conflicts and the potential threat of new refugee flows. In this context, we reaffirmed our determination to support the efforts of the international community, within the UN legal framework, to cut the lines of smuggling and people trafficking, and to maintain and strengthen our regional coordination and cooperation on these issues.

We reaffirmed our understanding that, in order to avoid another migrant crisis, it is necessary to establish peace and stability by encouraging political and economic growth and creating conditions for human and social development in the countries of origin. In this regard, we expressed our concern about the deteriorating security environment and human rights violations in conflict-affected areas, stressing the need for a peaceful settlement of ongoing conflicts.

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 noted with deepening concern the continuing serious risks to the stability of our region posed by the illicit trafficking of human beings, arms and drugs, the international organized crime, the cyber and hybrid actions of countries outside our region.

We underlined the far-reaching consequence and influence of the digitalization of our societies which foster progress. In that context, acknowledging fake news as an instrument of influence in the region, we demonstrated our readiness for a more robust and comprehensive approach to counter these trends.

We recognized the importance of Joint Crises Management as a tool for mutual support in case of natural and man-made disasters and pandemic which provided us with opportunity to consider different options of military support to be provided by SEEBRIG under the respective legal framework and procedures.

We reaffirmed our determination to pursue European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the aspirant SEE countries. The SEDM Initiative is an instrument of growth, cohesion and union in this context.

We continued to support the “open door policy” for the states which are willing to join the SEDM process and further strengthen the regional cooperation.



We, the MPFSEE Ministers of Defense, reiterated our expectation that Sarajevo finalizes their national procedure for the ratification of MPFSEE Agreement, in order to welcome Sarajevo as a new member.



We, the MPFSEE Ministers of Defense, appreciated Bucharest's offer regarding the use of three national military training facilities by SEEBRIG's capabilities for Command Post Exercise/CPX, Field Training Exercise/FTX and Live Firing Exercise/LFX.

We welcomed the presence of the representative from Austria and highly appreciated his contribution as a guest to this meeting, sharing with us the Austrian experience in regional cooperation, in dealing with contemporary security challenges and responding to crises and natural disasters.

We appreciated the efforts of RACVIAC - Center for Security Cooperation as an important international organization in the SEE dealing with security issues, playing a significant role in the areas of confidence and security building measures, security cooperation, Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (C-WMD), Counter-Terrorism including Foreign Terrorist Fighters and contributing to the Euro-Atlantic processes. We will further promote and support the activities organized by RACVIAC with the aim to enhance the security dialogue and cooperation in SEE.

We expressed our gratitude to Minister of Defense Radmila SHEKERINSKA and Sofia SEDM CC/PMSC Chairmanship for their efforts to plan and successfully execute the SEDM Ministerial Meeting in 2021.

We confirmed that the next Ministerial Meeting will be hosted by Sofia in 2022 in accordance with the agreed schedule.



Plamen YORDANOV
SEDM-CC/PMSC Chairman