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View from the Black Sea Region

The decision made by defence ministers in February 2016 about the need of a persistent military presence along the Eastern flank of the Alliance should be materialized in Warsaw and contribute to reducing the risk of military conflict. In this context, Bulgaria welcomes the U.S. decision to increase their rotational military presence in Eastern Europe in 2017.



We believe that the Allies will be able to take an appropriate decision on the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP), also in view of the security challenges and threats in the Black Sea region. And that should be one of the main deliverables in Warsaw.

The summit should also focus on how to increase resilience of the member states against the variety of threats we face today—conventional, hybrid, cyber and others. Overcoming dependency on legacy Soviet-made equipment is one of the most essential elements of building resilience. Allies must find the right formula for collective commitment, including use of NATO common funding mechanisms to support the nations in their endeavor for rearmament.

The current security environment is dynamic, complex and controversial. There are a number of hard to predict challenges, risks and threats to the national and global security. These threats are related to a number of developments such as the crisis in Ukraine, “hybrid warfare”; international terrorism and IS/DAESH activities; the persisting security challenges in the Western Balkans; the frozen conflicts in the Black Sea region; the conflicts in the Near and Middle East and North Africa; the proliferation of WMDs, etc.

Mass illegal migration flow is one of the main concerns for the national security of the Republic of Bulgaria. There is a durable deterioration of the security environment to the East and South of NATO borders that directly or indirectly affects the national security of the country and requires the development of defence capabilities and maintaining them in operational readiness.

The change of the strategic security environment in the Black Sea Region is a source of threats and challenges to Bulgaria due to the crisis ensuing from Russia’s annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and

destabilization of eastern Ukraine.

Security risks have been further increased by Russia's intense attempts to restore and expand its spheres of influence through military, economic and cultural cooperation as well as by exerting pressure regarding the foreign political orientation of individuals.

The crisis in Ukraine is an example of the increasing vulnerability of states when the instruments of hybrid warfare are effectively used for achieving political goals, pursued with conventional and non-conventional methods, military and non-military ways and means with special focus on conducting information warfare, psychological operations, cyber-attacks, economic and trade instruments, especially Bulgaria's energy dependence.

Another challenge to security is posed by the attempts of some foreign states to shape public opinion through disinformation, propaganda campaigns, media manipulation, using social networks for promoting misleading information, initiatives of populist party leaders for manipulation of target groups of electors, creating confusion among the population, etc.

The increase and modernization of the Russian military capabilities in Crimea, as well as Russia's expanded access to the Black Sea, including access to the energy resources found in it, have altered the geostrategic and military balance in the Black Sea Region.

Resolving the Ukrainian crisis is of crucial importance for Bulgaria in view of its geographic closeness, the presence of a large Bulgarian national minority in Southern Ukraine, and our partnership responsibilities as a EU and NATO member state.

The limited financial resources have had a negative impact on the maintenance, build-up and development of defence capabilities of the Armed Forces. Restrictions imposed on the defence budget delayed the acquisition of modern interoperable capabilities and affected the maintenance of available armaments and equipment. In November 2015, Parliament adopted a "Programme for Development of the Defence Capabilities of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria 2020" (Programme 2020). Programme 2020 defines the parameters and guidelines for development and build-up of defence capabilities of the Armed Forces. The main focus has shifted from organizational and structural changes to development of defence capabilities through modernization.

In order to implement modernization, there is a definite need for stability and clarity with respect to the financial resources that Bulgarian society is ready and willing to contribute for defence. Programme 2020 provides an increase of defence resources. The Defence budget for the period 2016–2018 is planned to be set in accordance to the budget for 2014 (no less than 1.35% of the GDP), thus meeting the immediate requirement coming out of the NATO Wales Summit—to stop the decline in defence spending. Furthermore, for the period 2019–2022, the budget will reach 1.5% of the GDP. In 2024, Bulgaria expects to reach the 2% GDP NATO guideline expenditure index and achieve a ratio of 60:20:20 for personnel, O&M and investments respectively. The 20% margin for investments will allow us to implement investment projects for modernization.

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