

JOINT STATEMENT

SEDM MINISTERS OF DEFENCE MEETING

Sofia, 21st October 2009

The Defence Ministers of the South Eastern Europe Defence Ministerial (SEDM) Process:

His Excellency Arben IMAMI

His Excellency Selmo CIKOTIĆ

His Excellency Nickolay MLADENOV

His Excellency Branko VUKELIĆ, represented by Pjer ŠIMUNOVIĆ, State Secretary of Defence

His Excellency Zoran KONJANOVSKI

His Excellency Evangelos VENIZELOS

His Excellency Ignazio LA RUSSA, represented by H.E. Giuseppe COSSIGA, Deputy Minister of Defence

His Excellency Mihai STĂNIȘOARĂ, represented by Viorel OANCEA, State Secretary for Defence Policy and Planning

Her Excellency Ljubica JELUŠIĆ

His Excellency Mehmet Vecdi GÖNÜL

His Excellency Valerii IVASHCHENKO

His Excellency Robert M. GATES, represented by Ambassador Alexander VERSHBOW, Assistant Secretary of Defence

together with the Ministers of Defence from the SEDM Observer Countries:

His Excellency Boro VUČINIĆ, represented by Mr. Draško JOVANOVIĆ, Deputy Minister for Defence Policy

His Excellency Dragan ŠUTANOVAC represented by Mr. Dušan SPASOJEVIĆ, State Secretary of Defence

His Excellency Bachana Akhalaia represented by His Excellency, Mikheil Ukleba, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Georgia to Bulgaria,

His Excellency Vitalie MARINUTA, Minister of Defence,

met in Sofia on 21 October, 2009 strongly determined to promote enduring peace stability and security in South Eastern Europe.

SEDM members responded positively to the official applications for SEDM membership submitted by the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Montenegro and the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Serbia. The Ministers welcomed Montenegro and Serbia into SEDM and encouraged them to complete the necessary legal procedures as soon as possible.

SEDM ministers affirmed that the welcoming of Montenegro and Serbia as new SEDM members is a demonstration of SEDM's "open door" policy for new participants, which holds that any country that supports SEDM's principles is able to join. Accordingly, SEDM ministers look forward to admitting additional members from the countries of the region and beyond in the future.

MPFSEE Ministers welcomed Bosnia and Herzegovina as MPFSEE observer and strongly encouraged its consideration to join SEEBRIG as a full-fledged member. SEDM Ministers praised the successful organization and conduct of the Combined Endeavour Exercise 09, and also welcomed Bosnia and Herzegovina's official application for NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP).

The MPFSEE Ministers reiterated their support for Ukraine's decision to accede to the MPFSEE Agreement, expressing their hope to see Ukraine as a full-fledged member in MPFSEE as soon as possible.

SEDM Ministers of Defence took note of the report presented by the Chairman of the SEDM Coordinating Committee (SEDM-CC) and the Politico Military Steering Committee (PMSC), Mr. Anyu Angelov, Lt Gen (Ret.), Deputy Minister of Defence of the Republic of Bulgaria in which he highlighted the Bulgarian Chairmanship 2009 – 2011 priorities aimed at the achievement of tangible results: strengthening the role of SEDM as a key Forum for cooperation and dialogue on security issues on a regional scale; adapting SEDM Process to the requirements of the ever-changing security environment in the region and worldwide; emphasis on the need for further evaluation of possible SEEBRIG engagement in UN or OSCE mandated, NATO-led or EU-led PSOs, or crisis response/disaster relief operations; provision of optimum opportunities for further development of SEDM projects avoiding duplication, overlapping and competition.

The SEDM Ministers agreed that it is necessary to keep SEDM's future roles and missions on the agenda of the respective bodies of the SEDM Process in order to focus SEDM-CC, PMSC, and SEEBRIG on the activities that best support interoperability and Euro-Atlantic integration of current and future SEDM Nations.

The SEDM Ministers took note of the Chairman's update on the status of the current SEDM Projects: SEE Simulation network (SEESIM) project, Interconnection of Military Hospitals (IMIHO), Counterterrorism Border Security and Counterproliferation (CBSC), SEE Military Education Cooperation (SEMEC) and the need of their optimization to avoid overlapping and duplication with other regional initiatives and activities. The Observer Nations were encouraged to be more proactive in SEDM project implementation.

The MPFSEE Ministers took note of the COMSEEBRIG, Brigadier General Zyber Dushku's report on SEEBRIG achievements since the last SEDM Ministerial Meeting in 2008, and future activities. They tasked COMSEEBRIG to prepare an in-depth analysis of the SEEBRIG current status and capabilities for possible involvement in future missions reflecting the new realities.

MPFSEE member and observer nations will provide SEEBRIG HQ with the necessary support and information for the analysis to be completed and presented to the nations two months prior to the 23rd PMSC Meeting in March 2010, along with appropriate recommendations for possible SEEBRIG deployment.

The MPFSEE Ministers of Defence approved:

- the SEEBRIG Main Activities Plan for 2010 – 2012;
- the SEEBRIG Training and Travel Plan for 2010;
- the SEEBRIG SEEDRO Concept.
- the Medium Term Financial Plan 2010-2012,
- the Detailed Budget Plan for Fiscal Year 2010,

The MPFSEE Ministers of Defence authorized COMSEEBRIG to transfer funds up to 20% of the approved budget.

The SEDM Ministers reiterated that the enlargement of NATO has been an unambiguous success in bringing new contributing nations in to the Alliance. Their efforts and NATO's efforts as a whole have been instrumental in projecting security and stability throughout the Euro-Atlantic area. They reiterated their belief that the continuation of regionally balanced enlargement is an essential element of NATO's ongoing transformation. In this regard, they called on the NATO member states to continue the Alliance's "open door" policy in line with Riga, Bucharest, and Strasbourg - Kehl NATO Summits Declarations.

SEDM Ministers expressed their continuous support for ongoing NATO and EU-led operations in the region and beyond, and reiterated their commitment to contribute to NATO and the EU efforts for further strengthening security, stability and sustainable peace. Ministers took note of the briefing presented by JFC Naples Commander, Admiral Mark Fitzgerald.

SEDM Ministers welcomed the presentation made by Bulgaria on the “C4I Cooperation in Southeast Europe /C4ICSE/“ Project which aims to support security and confidence building and to improve the interoperability among SEDM Nations.

Ministers took note of the statement made by NATO NC3A Deputy General Manager, Mr. Kevin SCHEID.

Ministers took note of the statement made by Regional Cooperation Council’s representative.

The SEDM Ministers signed the Agreement on the Coordination Committee in the framework of the SEDM Process emphasizing its vital importance for the future development of the Process.

MPFSEE Ministers signed the 5th Additional Protocol to the MPFSEE Agreement reflecting the necessary updates due to changes in the financial, logistical and organizational parameters of the Brigade.

Ministers expressed their appreciation to Minister of Defence of Slovenia, Her Excellency Ljubica JELUŠIČ, for Slovenia’s offer to host the next DCHODs Meeting in June 2010.

Ministers thanked the Minister of Defence of Albania, His Excellency Arben IMAMI for offering to host the next annual SEDM Ministerial Meeting in Albania in 2010.

Finally, the Ministers expressed their gratitude to the Host Nation’s Minister of Defence, His Excellency, Nickolay Mladenov, for his warm hospitality in hosting this meeting. They also expressed appreciation for the efforts of his staff and SEDM-CC and PMSC Secretariat in preparing and organizing the Ministerial meeting.