



**JOINT STATEMENT**  
**SEDM MINISTERS OF DEFENSE MEETING**

**Rome, 18<sup>th</sup> October 2016**

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

Her Excellency Mimi KODHELI,

Her Excellency Marina PENDES,

His Excellency Nikolay NENCHEV, represented by Atanas ZAPRYANOV, Deputy Minister of Defense,

His Excellency Josip BULJEVIĆ represented by Nikola BRZICA, Assistant Minister of Defense,

His Excellency Zoran JOLEVSKI,

His Excellency Levan IZORIA represented by Lela CHIQOVANI, First Deputy Minister of Defense,

His Excellency Panos KAMMENOS, represented by Dimitrios VITSAS, Alternate Minister of National Defense,

Her Excellency Roberta PINOTTI,

Her Excellency Milica Pejanovic-DJURISIC, represented by Velibor BAKRAC, Head of Department of International Cooperation,

His Excellency Mihnea-Ioan MOTOC,

His Excellency Zoran DJORDJEVIC,

Her Excellency Andreja KATIC, represented by Miloš BIZJAK, State Secretary

His Excellency Fikri IŞIK,

His Excellency Stepan POLTORAK represented by Ihor DOLHOV, Deputy Minister of Defense,

Together with the Minister of Defense from the SEDM Observer Country:

His Excellency Anatolie SALARU

met in Rome on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2016, strongly determined to promote, within the international law, enduring peace, stability and security in the region of Southeastern Europe (SEE) through the SEDM Process.

We highly appreciated the encouraging opening remarks by the Defense Minister of Italy, H.E Roberta PINOTTI, and by the Chairman of SEDM-CC/PMSC, H.E. Ambassador Hüseyin MÜFTÜOĞLU.



This being the last Ministerial Meeting during the Turkish Chairmanship for the period of 2015-2017, we expressed our thanks and appreciation to Ankara as well as to the Chairman of the SEDM-CC/PMSC for the excellent work they have conducted so far. We also extended our wishes of success to the newly appointed COMSEEBRIG Brigadier General Faruk METİN.

We noted with satisfaction the achievements obtained within the process as presented by the Chairman of the SEDM-CC/PMSC in his update on the SEDM projects and the way ahead. We welcomed the progress accomplished in all current projects and in the MPFSEE countries' efforts to revise the MPFSEE Agreement, the Additional protocols to it and the HQ SEEBRIG Location and Critical Rotational slot Table after the year 2015.

We fully supported the assessment of the Chairman of SEDM-CC/PMSC, indicating that the member nations' commitment to the fundamental goal to intensify understanding and political-military cooperation in the South Eastern Europe should be preserved for the purpose of strengthening stability and security in the region and that as the process marks its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2016, this might constitute a good opportunity for the member nations as well as the Secretariat to seek the means and tools to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of the process.

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 and defense architecture, prevent destructive and dangerous efforts to change it, and to promote cooperation in migration flows' management and in traffickers/smugglers fighting and a common approach to tackle terrorism.

Referring to the international law we reaffirmed our strong commitment to the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We fully acknowledged the current threats to the international peace and security and we condemned all terrorist attacks which recently took place in different parts of the world, voicing our belief that the unbroken chain of terrorist acts brings about the need for an orchestrated and unified move to confront terrorism and extremism globally. We underlined the importance of close cooperation aiming at preventing radicalization and violent extremism in the area. However, it was stressed that only by tackling the root causes of terrorism, this phenomenon can be addressed efficiently in the long term.

To better respond to challenges such as the phenomenon of foreign fighters and radicalization, a NATO Center of Excellence will be established in Tirana, which will focus on building the adequate expertise to tackle this phenomenon. We noted the information provided on the progress achieved so far in this project.

Moreover, faced with the changing nature of current security threats, we recognized the rising need for well-trained Public Affairs personnel, already identified as a scarce resource and a critical enabler to our overall efforts aimed at peace and security. In this context we noted information on the importance of the Public Affairs Regional Centre (PARC) which is located in Skopje, as the single center in the region that has full capacity to meet our regional and NATO needs for providing skilled Public Affairs personnel. We therefore acknowledged the importance of sharing responsibility for maintaining PARC's progress and further ensuring PARC's future.

We, also, acknowledged with a great concern the common challenge which many SEE countries face in the form of a refugee and migration crisis. We welcomed the ongoing united efforts undertaken in the form of maritime operations/missions to rescue people in distress at sea and save thousands of human lives, to alleviate the migration flow, stressing that coordinated efforts and cooperation among the SEE countries should be maintained to address the difficulties in the face of this unprecedented crisis.

Undoubtedly, bringing peace and stability, providing a sustainable economic growth, and thus creating the suitable conditions for human and social development in the source countries will encourage the people of these countries to seek their future in their homelands rather than looking for it in other countries, especially in Europe.

We welcomed Sarajevo's successful hosting of the last DCHODs meeting and take this opportunity to reiterate our expectation that Sarajevo joins, as early as possible, the MPFSEE nations. We stressed that inclusion of Sarajevo in the MPFSEE will make an important contribution to the SEEBRIG capabilities.

We confirmed our dedication to the 'open door policy' for the aspirant states that want to be part of the SEDM Process and whose participation could help fulfill the recognized shortfalls and capability gap of SEEBRIG.

We once again encouraged Chisinau to become a full member in the SEDM Process.

The MPFSEE Ministers appreciated the report of COMSEEBRIG on activities since the last Ministerial Meeting, stressing that the upcoming "SEVEN STARS 2016" exercise will enhance the interoperability with NATO structures, the collaboration with other international organizations, and will generate a better understanding for Peace Support, Disaster Relief, and Humanitarian Assistance Operations among HQ SEEBRIG and SEEBRIG affiliated units.

The MPFSEE Ministers took note of Bucharest's proposal to affiliate SEEBRIG to Multinational Division – South East (MNDSE HQ), with the aim to facilitate its training and exercising in line with the NATO procedures. Bucharest will further work with MPFSEE States and PMSC Secretariat on their proposal regarding SEEBRIG affiliation for training and exercises so that concrete options in that regard can be considered by the next PMSC Meeting.

The MPFSEE Ministers recognized the importance of the efforts to enhance SEEBRIG effectiveness as a mechanism to actively contribute to security, cooperation and stability within the SEDM Process in general, and seeking the most appropriate ways for engagement of SEEBRIG in various activities, including training and operations, in

particular. The consolidation and optimization of SEEBRIG relationship with IOs, especially with NATO were underlined.

Against this background, the MPFSEE Ministers approved the HQ SEEBRIG Annual Plan (Main Activities, Training and Travel Plan) for 2017 and SEEBRIG's Budget for the Fiscal Year 2017, as well as COMSEEBRIG's authorization to re-allocate up to 20% among chapters of the approved 2017 Budget.

With regard to the location of the SEEBRIG HQ, MPFSEE Ministers noted with appreciation the consensus reached under the formula of (3+6) that is to say the HQ SEEBRIG staying in Larissa until 2020 to be followed by its relocation in Skopje between 2020-2026, for the sake of cooperation, compromise and solidarity, as well as the PMSC Chairmanship's efforts aimed at finding a solution acceptable to all related parties. The MPFSEE Ministers in principle agreed with the HQ SEEBRIG rotation and also instructed the Secretariat to work in corporation with the delegations, on the completion of the legal basis before the next Ministerial Meeting in 2017.

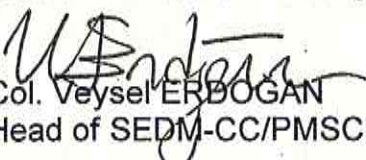
We welcomed the efforts of RACVIAC- Center for Security Cooperation as an important international organization in the SEE Region dealing with the security issues, playing a leading role in the areas of confidence and security building measures, security cooperation, counter terrorism efforts. Therefore, we will further promote and support the activities organized by the RACVIAC with the aim to enhance the security dialogue in the SEE region.

Through the videos uploaded on the SEDM Portal we, as the Defense Ministers of our respective countries, added our voice in celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the SEDM Process with the high expectation that the peaceful relations between and among the all SEDM countries are further strengthened in the upcoming decade.

We conveyed our gratitude to Rome for the excellent hospitality extended to all delegations during the Ministerial Meeting. We confirmed that the next Ministerial Meeting will be hosted by the Ministry of Defense of Georgia in October 2017, according to the meeting calendar.

We expressed our appreciation for the presence and contributions of the representatives from the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), RACVIAC- Center for Security Cooperation and European External Action Service.

We expressed our sincere gratitude to the Minister of Defense of Italy, H.E.Roberta PINOTTI and to all officials both from the Ministry of Defense of Italy and SEDM-CC/PMSC Secretariat for their tireless efforts in successfully preparing and conducting the annual SEDM Ministerial Meeting.

  
Col. Veysel ERBOGAN  
Head of SEDM-CC/PMSC Secretariat

  
H.E.Amb. Hüseyin MİŞİTOĞLU  
Chairman of SEDM-CC/PMSC Secretariat

