

***Cooperation in Developing Capabilities,
Solidarity in Sharing Responsibilities***

Joint statement of the Ministers of Defence of the Czech Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany, the French Republic, Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic after their meeting in Warsaw

March 6, 2013

While the consequences of the global financial crisis will keep on impacting our military budgets, strengthening multinational defence cooperation is an objective on which we should all focus. We remain committed to work actively on strengthening European defence capabilities that will contribute to the development of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and the strengthening of NATO.

Developing capabilities and strengthening the European defence cooperation

We are determined to develop military and defence cooperation between our countries and also through the use of regional cooperation mechanisms, including the Visegrad Group (V4) and the Weimar Triangle.

We are determined to turn NATO's "Smart Defence" and the EU's "Pooling and Sharing" initiative into effective and efficient responses to the decreasing defence spending, at the only condition that it does not become an excuse for any weakening of national defence commitments.

NATO and the EU should work closely together to ensure that their respective initiatives are complementary, mutually reinforcing and focused on delivering the required capabilities, while avoiding unnecessary duplications.

We wish our defence cooperation to help in achieving the goal of the "NATO Forces 2020" project adopted at the Chicago Summit. Maintaining the allied forces' interoperability will be a major challenge in this respect, especially since we are all confronted by the termination of ISAF in 2014. NATO intends to meet this challenge through the Connected Forces Initiative, to which we are all committed. We are determined to enhance our cooperation in the realm of military training, education and exercises, as evidenced by our participation in this year's major NATO exercises: *Steadfast Jazz* in Poland and *Capable Logistician* in Slovakia. We support the Alliance exercise policy that covers a wide spectrum of possible military operations. NATO Response Force should be a flagship in this endeavour.

Our cooperation supports the efforts aimed at improving competitiveness of the European defence industry, making it more capable of delivering key military capabilities through technologically advanced projects. To this end, we support a more sustainable, innovative and competitive European Defence Technological and Industrial Base that values small and medium-sized enterprises.

The European Air Transport Command (EATC), as well as the Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC) are important examples of pooled resources in a restricted operational and budgetary environment. The “air-to-air refuelling” project led by the European Defence Agency is also a promising new initiative, as well as Multinational Aviation Training Centre (MATC) developed under the auspices of NATO’s “Smart Defence”.

Being operationally efficient through flexibility and responsiveness

We confirm, ten years after CSDP first deployment, our full support to EU military operations and civilian missions. They have proven the ability of the EU to act in the field, including on an autonomous basis, and demonstrated their importance within the implementation of a comprehensive approach to tackle complex crises. Mali shows that we live in a world where defending our interests and security will increasingly depend on the ability to launch military operations quickly and effectively.

We are in favor of increasing the usability of the EU Battlegroups. The “Weimar Battlegroup”, currently on stand-by, is effective thanks to the military collaboration of Germany, Poland and France. The planned 2016 “Visegrad Battlegroup”, which will gather the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, demonstrates that our forces can be used in multiple yet complementary frameworks.

We expect the December 2013 European Council to further guide the overall development of the CSDP including operations, capabilities and industrial areas, as described in the conclusions of the December 2012 European Council. The Foreign Affairs / Defence Council, which will take place on 23 April 2013, represents an important step to maintain the current political dynamic in this regard.

Decisive steps forward have to be made in asserting a common political will to act and to tackle the threats to our security. This should come together with the ability to act together. Our cooperation is a means to improve burden sharing both on a European and on a transatlantic level.