



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°878
Vienna, 7 March 2018**

**EU Statement on the Regional military cooperation
of the Visegrád Group**

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome the guest speakers to the Forum for Security Co-operation and thank them for their presentations. We commend the Slovak FSC Chairmanship for the attention given to the topic of regional security and defence cooperation. In this context, we reaffirm the importance of the principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act concerning the inherent right of sovereign states to choose whether or not they belong to international organisations, bilateral or multilateral treaties, or treaties of alliance.

We appreciate the opportunity to listen to lessons learnt from the regional military cooperation of Visegrád Group states. We welcome the initiative to include this topic in the FSC agenda in order to share perspectives on the advantages, but also on possible challenges for their cooperative approach in the area of security and defence. We note that, for the Visegrád Group states, closer defence cooperation, based on geographic proximity, common objectives, values and culture, can help close the existing gap between capability needs and available budgets. Their strengthening of security and defence cooperation is important given the deterioration in the European security environment and emerging security challenges. We thank the speakers for presenting the benefits of the deepening cooperation among V4 countries, while remaining transparent and open to collaboration with third states. These efforts complement their collaboration with third states, and with traditional international and regional frameworks, such as NATO and the European Union, and can serve as an example for others. We underline that the V4 cooperation fully adheres to the existing principles and commitments in the politico-military area and as such enhances stability and contributes to building trust among participating States.

In the European Union, we follow a similar approach. Key challenges to peace and stability continue to underscore the need for the EU to adapt and increase its capacities as a security provider. To the East, the European security order has been violated by the Russian Federation, and to the South, terrorism and violence plague North Africa and the Middle East, and additional current security challenges originate from instability in the EU's immediate neighbourhood and the changing forms of threats. It was in this context that the EU Global Strategy was developed and presented in June 2016. Building on the progress made in the first year of implementing the EU Global Strategy, EU Member States agreed to add two new priorities for its implementation: supporting global governance and the United Nations in particular, and continuing to strengthen cooperation in all priority fields, including security and defence.

In the context of closer cooperation in security and defence Member States agreed to step up the European Union's work in this area and acknowledged that enhanced coordination, increased investment in defence and cooperation, and in developing defence capabilities are key requirements to achieve it. To this end much has been done over the past few months: the new Military Planning and Conduct Capability for EU military training and advisory missions has become a reality, as well as the coordinated annual review of national defence budgets, and a Permanent Structured Cooperation on Security and Defence (PESCO) was established. The aim of these steps is to increase effectiveness in addressing security challenges and advancing towards further integrating and strengthening security and defence cooperation within the EU framework.

Mr. Chairman, before concluding we would like to use the presence of the distinguished speakers in our midst and ask them to elaborate whether and to what extent the V4 Defence Cooperation can be used as a model for other groups of states and other regions.

Finally, we once again thank the speakers as well as the FSC Chairmanship for providing us with the opportunity to exchange views on this interesting topic.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA, align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.