

JOINT STATEMENT
on enhancing regional cooperation through regional centres in the
Western Balkans

We, the ministers of defence of the Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Croatia, Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Republic of Serbia and Republic of Slovenia are committed to promoting and deepening regional cooperation among our countries in the spirit of good neighbourly relations, confidence building, intensified cooperation and regular exchange of information in the field of Defence Reforms and best practices.

In addition to existing regional cooperation, in recent years we have been strengthening and deepening a pragmatic approach to regional cooperation in the field of common and comparable Defence Reforms challenges in the Southeast Europe region. A pragmatic mechanism, the Southeast Europe Clearinghouse has been established by all Countries in the region. It is a flexible, practical and useful tool devoted to Defence Reforms and issues - regular exchange of information, specific Defence Reform projects and common regional challenges.

In 2007 the regular meetings were upgraded with the first Southeast Europe Regional Defence Policy Directors meeting in the Western Balkans format. Since then it became an independent and permanent regional defence forum, which in June 2008 resulted in an informal Defence Ministers meeting in the Western Balkans format. Support for regular Ministerial Meetings and development of pragmatic regional cooperation in this format was expressed by all participants.

We, the Ministers of Defence therefore agree that SEE Defence Ministers Meetings, directors meetings as well as regular expert meetings are important forums for promoting and developing regional cooperation, exchanging best practices, achieving high professional standards and should be continued in the future. Combined, these events present an important step forward and a solid platform towards increased comprehensive and transparent Defence and Security dialogue, positive development and confidence building in the region.

We agree that regional approach to some common challenges is a rational and practical method of cooperation, which also gives an opportunity for cooperation on specific education and training issues, including with a view on possible cooperation in the field of international operations in the future. One of the key objectives of regional cooperation is synchronization of valuable resources, experiences and knowledge, therefore an integrated concept offers an added value and mutual benefits to our common efforts.

Thus we have agreed to collectively support the idea of establishing three regional centres with the highest level of common interest to be developed and used by all countries in the region, namely:

- 1.) Peace Support Operations Training Centre in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- 2.) Media Training Centre in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia,
- 3.) Nuclear, Biological, Chemical Defence Centre in Kruševac, Republic of Serbia.

In the process of establishing these three regional projects the following agreed criteria for a true regional centres shall be considered:

- options for collective budgeting, management and use,
- options for collective planning and realization of training and education,
- participation of countries from the region,
- other aspects.

Work should also continue on examining possibilities in other areas of cooperation and possible establishment of additional regional centres.

In this regard we fully encourage close cooperation on these issues. All possibilities and venues will be explored through continuous contacts at the working, expert and decision-making levels. Working groups for each Centre shall be established by the Country leading the effort and other interested Countries from the region and wider. Evaluation, plans and specific proposals shall be provided by the Working Groups and processed at the Policy Directors level for further consideration by the Defence Ministers.

Joint cooperation is vital since these centres would address common capability requirements and related goals. We should also join our efforts to promote these centres outside the region and achieve their recognition on the principles of expertise and standards of excellence.

We have already outlined and will also continue to support regional cooperation in other fields of common interest where the willingness and interest will be expressed by partner countries. Dialogue on these issues will continue at all levels.

We task the respective Defence Policy Directors to work on the implementation of the above proposals and issues upon the evaluation and recommendation of the relevant experts.

Signed in Sarajevo 18th November 2009

Minister of Defence
Republic of Albania



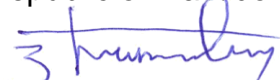
Minister of Defence
Bosnia and Herzegovina



Minister of Defence
Republic of Croatia



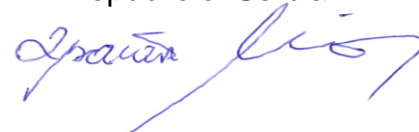
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