



**JOINT STATEMENT
OF THE MINISTERS OF DEFENCE
OF THE SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN COOPERATION PROCESS (*SEECP*)**

Belgrade, 11-12 April 2012

1. We, the Ministers of Defence of the Participating States in the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP): H.E. Mr Anu Anguelov, Minister, H.E. Ms Milica Pejanović-Đurišić, Minister, H.E. Mr Dragan Šutanovac, Minister, H.E. Mr Ismet Yilmaz, Minister, Mr Arian Starova, Deputy Minister, Mr Mirko Okolić, Deputy Minister, Ms Višnja Tafra, Deputy Minister, Mr Emil Dimitriev, Deputy Minister, Mr Viorel Oancea, State Secretary for Defence Policy and Planning, Mr Peter Stavanja, State Secretary, H.E. Mr Dimosthenis Stoidis, Ambassador, met in Belgrade on 11 and 12 April 2012 in order to continue the discussions on the future regional cooperation in the field of security, which were initiated within the framework of our previous meetings in Sarajevo in 2004, Bucharest in 2005, Sofia in 2008 and Budva in 2011.

2. We warmly welcome the participation of H.E. Mr Hido Bišćević, Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), Mr Frank Boland, Director of the Force Planning Directorate in NATO, H.E. Mr Nikola Todorčevski, Ambassador, Director of the RACVIAC - Center for Security Cooperation, H.E. Mr Vincent Deger, Ambassador, Head of Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia, H.E. Mr William Infante, Resident Coordinator of the UN, Mr Vladimir Bilandžić from the OSCE Mission to Serbia, accredited ambassadors of the SEECP countries to Serbia and Defence Attachés in Serbia, who attended the meeting as Special Invitees of the Serbian Chairmanship-in-Office.

3. We are deeply convinced that, ever since its establishment, defence cooperation among the SEECP nations has contributed to building confidence in goals that we seek to achieve: an unbreakable pattern of continuous cooperation in the region. Regional cooperation should provide an adequate framework for addressing the existing challenges that the region of South East Europe is facing.

4. Encouraging the continuation of efforts in the field of defence reforms, we strongly believe that the way to achieve lasting stability and prosperity in the region

is to raise the level of the European and Euro Atlantic integration, based on solidarity and democratic values. Encouraging dialogue and cooperation in defence matters is a good example of cooperation among the nations that belong to the SEECP region.

5. We are determined to promote good regional cooperation, good neighbourly relations and mutually acceptable solutions for outstanding issues. In this respect, we fully support the continuation of the "open door" policy pursued by the EU and NATO for the countries in the region. Therefore, we welcome the recent developments related to the European and Euro Atlantic integrations of the countries of the region. This will give fresh impetus to speeding up reforms in those countries and encouragement for the whole region to continue on their path towards the full membership to the EU and/or NATO.

6. States will strive to revive the spirit of reforming the societies with the aim to strengthen responsibility, transparency and competence on all levels and through a deepened institutional dialog with the European Commission and other relevant EU institutions. The emphasis is put on continuation of democratic processes and promotion of European values in SEECP states accelerating integration of all countries of the region in the European Union.

7. We strongly believe that future involvement of South East European states, according to their own pace, in cooperation with NATO and EU, will significantly contribute to multilateral effort in achieving regional, European and Euro Atlantic security and stability. In this context, we welcome the increasing opportunities for multinational cooperation, such as the NATO "Smart Defence" initiative and the EU's "Pooling and Sharing" concept, complementary to existing and emerging regional cooperation projects. We intend to make full use of these opportunities to seek ever more effective and efficient defence spending as well as further underpinning our cooperation.

8. Underlining the continuous process of defence and security transformation in the South East European states which is influenced by changes in modern societies caused by global economic crises, we are reaffirming our intentions to exchange each others experiences and further cooperate with all relevant international and regional actors in order to mitigate the consequences of unfavourable financial situation.

9. We strongly support the efforts and the achievements of Regional Cooperation Council, as the operational arm of the SEECP in developing and enhancing regional cooperation as a tool to strengthen stability and prosperity in SEE, thus promoting

the region's European and Euro-Atlantic integration. We reiterate our commitment that duplication of efforts must be prevented in the regional security and defence cooperation.

10. We express a great satisfaction with the results achieved by the RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation in completing necessary activities in all of the three main pillars - Security Sector Reform, International Relations and Cooperation and Cooperative Security Environment. We support the new RACVIAC Agreement which will transform this organization into a regionally owned one and will give a new impetus for improving relations within SEE region.

11. Determined to broaden the forum for improving understanding and political-military cooperation in the SEE region, we encourage South-Eastern Europe Defence Ministerial (SEDM) to continue with its efforts to enhance stability and security in the region. Especially, South-Eastern Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG) has been recognized as an important asset within the regional security system.

12. We are convinced that only the implementation of the UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security can ensure overall approach to shaping the area of stability in the SEE. Therefore, we welcome with great content launching of the Project "Female Leaders in Security and Defence" under the SEDM process and within the NATO "Smart Defence" initiative.

13. As a regionally owned initiative that provides a framework for SEE nations to develop programmes and projects leading to strengthening capabilities to prevent and respond to natural and man-made disaster, we express our support to the work of the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative (DPPI). The overarching goal is to foster regional cooperation and coordination in disaster preparedness and prevention.

14. We acknowledge the success of South East and East Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) as a joint project of Regional Cooperation Council and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in supporting national and regional capacities to control and reduce the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. We welcome the continuation of the work on the currently active projects with the full support of the international institutions and the idea to explore the possibility for financial support from the European Union.

15. We should improve cooperation and continue to share and make available the best practices and lessons learned, and exchange information, views and experience with international partners with the aim to develop a common approach to solve the

problem of surplus ammunition in the SEE region. We welcome the support of EU and NATO member states and other international organizations in addressing the surplus ammunition issue in the countries of the Southeast Europe region.

16. Having in mind the existing issue concerning the demilitarization of ammunition, we encourage countries of the region in intensifying the cooperation in dealing with the surplus ammunition. We take note of the proposal of the Republic of Serbia to offer the Technical Overhauling Facility in Kragujevac as a regional centre for demilitarization of ammunition and related training.

17. The participants in the Meeting expressed their gratitude to the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Serbia, Mr Dragan Šutanovac for his excellent hospitality, cordial reception and outstanding organization of the forum.