

Address of the Minister of Defense Vlado Misajlovski at the annual briefing with Defense Attachés – 18 December 2024 – Public Affairs Regional Center

Distinguished Defense Attachés,

Welcome to the premises of the Public Affairs Regional Center, which for us represents another strong capacity in the development of multilateral cooperation.

Although today is the first time we are meeting in this format, the fact that so far I have had the opportunity to talk with many of you at our bilateral meetings at the Ministry is a clear proof of our commitment to bilateral and multilateral defense policy, of course, and cooperation. Both my homeland and the countries you represent are part of a global international order that can function and guarantee the security of its citizens only if we cooperate sincerely and dedicatedly and if we have one goal in front of us - and that is peace, stability and democracy.

The world is facing a series of challenges. The disturbed security of the European continent with the open aggression of one country against another sovereign and independent country; threats of hybrid nature, including cyberspace; the spread of harmful misinformation; climate change – all this points to the indisputable fact that we are at a crossroads where we should do everything to choose the path to security and prosperity. Although at this meeting my colleagues from the Ministry and the Army will wrap up the year 2024 and all the activities that we have carried out over the past 365 days, I want to focus today on the future as well.

And we can see the future development for the defense and the Army primarily through the investments. The defense budget has been adopted and I am pleased that the Government and my fellow Ministers understood the needs of the Ministry of Defense. As in the past, the defense budget for the year 2025 amounts to more than 2 percent of the gross domestic product, with which we, as a NATO ally, meet the standard that we have jointly set. The commitment to investments in defense can also be seen in the structure of this adopted budget. I want to inform you that over 32 percent of the defense budget for 2025 will be allocated to modernization and equipping. Compared to 2024, that is over 18 million euros more for new and modern equipment, for a stronger Army, for stronger collective defense in NATO - the Alliance. It is another indisputable proof that our country is an active and committed ally.

But the contribution to NATO is not only in investments at home. It is clear and visible beyond our borders as well. Macedonian soldiers and officers work daily alongside their "brothers in NATO" - the KFOR mission in Kosovo, in the multinational NATO forces in Latvia, Bulgaria and Romania. The Macedonian flag will fly together with the flags of the allies in these countries in 2025 as well!

We remain active in the operation of the European Union in Bosnia and Herzegovina, ALTHEA, as well as in the mission of the United Nations in Lebanon, UNIFIL.

When I mentioned the cooperation with the European Union, I would like to point out that we recently signed a security and defense partnership agreement with the Union. For us, as a NATO member, we consider the activities in the field of defense to be complementary to the efforts of the Union. European security requires strong and permanent cooperation between the Union and the Alliance because our values, our ideals are unique and inseparable.

Macedonian values are European values and therefore our goal as Government and defense is the same commitment that the allies can see in NATO, to be able to offer it to the European Union as well. We have come a long and bumpy road in this process, and now the time has come to start walking together towards the common European family.

Dear Defense Attachés,

From the moment I assumed the position of Minister of Defense, I set three priorities in front of me in the development of defense, that is - stable budgeting, strengthening the modernization process and full respect for the rights and obligations towards employees, who are for me but also for everyone else our greatest resource. I am glad to say that we succeeded on all three grounds and that we continue to work in the same way next year. Today, you will be introduced to more details related to defense by experienced professionals in the Ministry and the Army. I wish you a successful day and at the very end let me repeat that cooperation among all of us is the key to restoring global security. You are one of the tools that allows our cooperation to develop, and therefore I thank you for the commitment you have shown.

Finally, you will allow me to congratulate you on the upcoming holidays, to wish you a successful year, to wish you a successful new year, and that we have an excellent cooperation in every field, and I am really grateful for these six months, for the excellent cooperation with almost all of you.

Thank you.