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## Speech of the Head of BBN at the Warsaw Security Forum 2018

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**Minister Paweł Soloch, took part in the Warsaw Security Forum 2018 conference. In the opening speech he indicated four elements that will shape the mainstream debates on the security of Poland, the region and Europe in the near future.**

### **Speech of the Head of BBN at the Warsaw Security Forum 2018**

It is a great pleasure for me to open one of the most important conferences in the CEE region devoted to international security. In particular I would like to congratulate the organizers of the fifth edition of the Warsaw Security Forum: Ms Katarzyna and Zbigniew Pisarski and the whole team of the Pulaski Foundation. They managed to gather here again excellent experts representing both the governments, as well as worldwide academic centers and non-governmental think-tanks.

I'm glad that the National Security Bureau I lead supports the organization of such an important event as a Strategic Partner since the first edition of the conference in 2014.

In my initial remarks I would like to name four elements, which - in my view - will drive the main course of debate on the security of Poland, the region and Europe as a whole.

First, Russia as a strategic security challenge.

Beyond doubt, Russian ambitions in Central and Eastern Europe pose the most grave challenge for the security of Poland and the region. But, Russian actions should be perceived more broadly, as an attempt to undermine the European - and global - security order.

The threats generated by an aggressive Russian policy are multidimensional: from the whole spectrum of hostile but yet non-military actions taken in information, cyber and energy domains, to dangerous military incidents and provocative large-scale drills and exercises, to full armed conflicts such as the one conducted against Ukraine. The latest outrageous example of Russian hostile behavior was the chemical attack in Salisbury in spring 2018.

In our view Vladimir Putin consistently pursues his policy to restore Russian imperial position. This plan reaches far beyond his presidency. The Kremlin endeavors to achieve this goal using all possible means, using mainly not on its own strengths, but rather exploiting certain weaknesses of the West.

Therefore, today our unity is more important than ever. The unity not only within NATO or the EU but also within the whole western democratic community. Our response to Russian actions must be coordinated and conducted in two dimensions: the Transatlantic and the European one.

Second, the condition of the Transatlantic Relations.

Maintaining a strong Transatlantic bond is crucial both for NATO as a whole, and for enhancing the security of its Eastern Flank. The process of further strategic adaptation of the Alliance which was initiated at the Summit in Wales, and continued during the meetings in Warsaw and Brussels is of particular importance to Polish security.

Europe needs the United States, and the U.S. needs Europe. We are facing the same threats and challenges. We have common security interests, we share the same values. Our tight cooperation guarantees European security.

One of the hot topics in the current international security debate is the quest for a European Strategic Culture. In this context I would like to remind that the strong Transatlantic bond is an indispensable part of this culture. This bond has let Western Europe live in peace and stability for over 70 years, and created the conditions for the CEE countries to join and integrate with the Euro-Atlantic structures after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Third, increasing the presence of U.S. troops in Poland

The realities in our part of Europe indicate that the United States takes its commitments seriously. An example of that is the ongoing discussion about the possibility to enhance American military presence in Poland. It was one of the topics raised by President Duda during his recent visit in the White House.

I would like to underline that we perceive the potential boost of the U.S. military presence in Poland as an investment in the security of the whole region.

We are convinced that bilateral cooperation, in accordance with Article 3 of the Washington Treaty, contributes to increased effectiveness, coherence and credibility of NATO. In this spirit we keep our Allies updated on developments in this respect. It was also the topic of mine, and Minister Jacek Czaputowicz`s recent meeting with Secretary General of the Alliance Jens Stoltenberg.

Fourth, stimulating the European defense cooperation

Parallel to our efforts to deepen the relations with the U.S. we are engaging constructively in the mechanisms of defense cooperation within the European Union. This process gained new dynamics recently and surely it will continue in the coming years. Our approach to the development of the Common Security and Defense Policy is very pragmatic.

We actively participate in the creation of its new instruments: the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European Defense Fund. We want them to strengthen the real capabilities for collective defense of the European countries and to promote their engagement within NATO.

We would like to make good use of this European opportunity not only to increase our national defense potential, but also to tighten the political, military and industrial cooperation with the European partners.

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Concluding, I would like to underline that this edition of the Warsaw Security Forum takes place in a special year. 2018 marks the celebration of the 100 years of independence of Poland, but also of a number of other countries in our region.

Such an important anniversary presents good opportunity to think about the history, but it should also encourage us to discuss about the future. Such reflection is particularly important in the face of numerous challenges to our security.

Therefore I welcome the rich agenda of this year`s edition of the WSF.

I thank you and wish you fruitful discussions.

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