

Joint statement by the leaders of Bucharest Nine

JOINT STATEMENT BY THE LEADERS OF BUCHAREST NINE

We, the Heads of State and Government of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and the Slovak Republic, met today one year since Russia launched its unprovoked and brutal war of aggression against Ukraine. We welcome the participation of the President of the United States and NATO's Secretary General at our meeting, which serves as a testimony to the strength of the transatlantic bond and underscores NATO's unwavering commitment to defend every inch of Allied territory.

A year ago, Russia ravaged peace and security in Europe by trying to subdue Ukraine by force. Kremlin's actions led to a drastic degradation of the security environment in the Euro-Atlantic area, also gravely deteriorating the security of our partners.

Russia is the most significant and direct threat to Allied security. In response to Russia's bloody war of aggression, Allies reacted decisively in a united and responsible manner. To protect their populations and territory, Allies are committed to implementing the new baseline for NATO's deterrence and defense posture and to enhancing Allied military presence in our countries.

NATO is a defensive alliance. In Madrid, we agreed on forward defenses with robust in-place, multi-domain, combat-ready forces to remain credible and capable of denying any potential adversary any possible opportunity for aggression. In the run-up to the Vilnius summit, we will continue to reinforce our deterrence and defense posture across the entire Eastern flank from the Baltic to the Black Sea. NATO and its Article 5 commitment to defend each other stand as the backbone of Euro-Atlantic security.

Reaffirming our commitment to the Open Door policy, in Madrid we invited Finland and Sweden to join the Alliance. We look forward to welcoming them soon as NATO Allies.

We condemn Russia's war of aggression in the strongest possible terms. Ukraine's civilian death toll is surging due to Russia's indiscriminate missile strikes and deliberate attacks on critical infrastructure, including using the Black Sea as a launchpad. Those responsible for atrocities and war crimes will be held accountable. We are determined to sustain international pressure on Russia. We also condemn all those, including Belarus, who are actively facilitating Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

In line with the UN Charter and international law, Ukraine is exercising its legitimate right to defend itself against the Russian aggression to regain full control of its territory and has the right to liberate occupied territories within its internationally recognized borders. We will continue to support Ukraine's efforts to this end, as long as necessary. We salute the heroism of Ukrainian people and valiance of their military. We pay tribute to the Ukrainian servicemen and servicewomen defending their freedom and our common values.

Ukraine's future lies in Europe. We firmly support Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

We stand ready to cooperate closely and support our partners the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, that are most at risk of Kremlin's destabilizing and malign influence, in the East and the South of the Alliance.

Russia has gravely miscalculated by invading Ukraine and undermining the rules-based international order.

We are stronger and more united than ever, reaffirming the enduring transatlantic bond among our nations.
We will continue to strive for peace, security and stability in the whole of the Euro-Atlantic area.

We look forward to our next meeting in Bratislava in June, as we approach the NATO summit in Vilnius.

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