

Ομιλία κ. ΑΓΓΕΘΑ
σε Black Sea and Balkans Security Forum

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Esteemed Colleagues,

It is an honor to address you in the last session today at the Black Sea and Balkans Security Forum, a pivotal event for discussing the multifaceted security challenges besetting the Eastern Flank and beyond. First, allow me to thank *New Strategy Center*, the esteemed Romanian think tank, who have meticulously organized this forum, ensuring a thought-provoking dialogue. Diverse perspectives are invaluable to our understanding of these pressing matters, and I eagerly anticipate hearing them.

To begin with, the Eastern Flank is strategically important to NATO, serving as a critical buffer zone between the Alliance and Russia. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has significantly heightened our security concerns, prompting NATO and its member states to reassess and bolster their defense postures and capabilities. The new defense posture agreed upon at the Madrid Summit and reinforced at the Vilnius Summit last year is a testament to our collective commitment and unity in strengthening our security.

The invasion of Ukraine has not only become a catalyst for NATO's defence policy on the Eastern Flank but has also illuminated opportunities for enhancing our Alliance. Let me highlight a few significant prospects that have emerged in the wake of the Ukraine conflict.

Firstly, Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO marks a monumental shift. Before 2022, both nations maintained a cautious approach toward NATO membership, favoring strong cooperation over a formal alliance. Their swift accession has fortified NATO with their robust military capabilities, especially in Northeast, enhancing our collective defence posture against Russian leverage in the region.

Secondly, the Russian invasion has accelerated the implementation of NATO's new Deterrence and Defense Concept, originally agreed upon in 2020. This strategic shift addresses previously identified gaps in our forces, plans, and command structures. Recognising the urgency, Greece and of course all the Allied nations has proactively contributed to these efforts, underscoring the importance

of national commitment and resource allocation. Furthermore, the Allies made courageous decisions and increased defence spending. This collective determination has ushered in a new era for NATO's military reorganization, ensuring our preparedness and responsiveness, resilience and interoperability.

As we navigate these changes, it is obvious that Russia will emerge and will act as a more formidable threat post-February 2022. However, I am confident in NATO's multi-domain and 360⁰ transformation into a more proactive and globally oriented Alliance, reinforcing our historical reputation and military presence.

General Bradley, the first chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the United States Armed Forces, once said: "*Amateurs talk strategy, while professionals talk logistics.*" This insight underscores the critical importance of logistics and reinforcement, particularly in SACEUR's Area of Responsibility and more specifically the Eastern Flank. Ensuring effective military mobility and secure routes for force movement, such as through the Alexandroupolis land corridor, is paramount. Therefore, the cooperation established among Allied nations such as Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece with the crucial support of other nations in enhancing these logistical networks and supporting the Allied fuel supply chain expansion, through Alexandroupolis exemplifies our collective resilience and operational readiness.

Beyond the Eastern Flank, we must also address Russia's influence in Syria, Libya, the Middle East, North Africa, and the Sahel region. Monitoring and understanding Russian tactics in these areas is crucial for both forming strategic partnerships and preempting crises. Greece has historically maintained strong relations with nations in these regions, contributing to our comprehensive approach to security.

The challenges of pervasive instability, terrorism, and revisionist ambitions, particularly from state and non-state actors, demand our attention. Whereas NATO has strengthened its Eastern Flank, addressing the southern threats remains a critical and ongoing effort. A coherent 360-degree response is necessary. This approach acknowledges the interconnected nature of threats across different regions and involves a comprehensive assessment of the security landscape, the development of tailored strategies for each region, and the coordination of our efforts to ensure a unified response.

In the Middle East and North Africa, persistent turmoil, the existing conflicts, and civil wars in Syria, Libya, and Yemen underscore the need for a balanced and

proactive NATO approach. We are particularly concerned about the spread of terrorism, the proliferation of weapons, and the impact of these conflicts on regional stability. Promptly addressing these crises can mitigate their effects on irregular migration, terrorism, and regional stability.

A holistic response to these security challenges requires promoting cohesion, solidarity, and respect within the Alliance. Our strength lies in our unity, shared purpose, and fair burden-sharing. Adherence to International Law and NATO's fundamental principles and values, reaffirmed in the 2022 Strategic Concept, is essential to maintaining our credibility and effectiveness.

To enhance our strategic message and public appeal, NATO must address new areas of concern, such as irregular immigration and human trafficking, demonstrating our values to member states and their citizens. In addition, increased cooperation with the EU can maximize resource efficiency and avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts, building on the distinct strengths of both organizations.

In conclusion, considering the entire Alliance's security space, NATO must maintain a balanced policy on Eastern and Southern threats. Undeniably, we ensure our member states' continued stability and security by countering all challenges with a united front. NATO has already decided to be strategy-oriented and not crisis-oriented.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to our discussions and the valuable insights that will emerge.