

**OPENING SPEECH**  
**to be delivered by**  
**Minister of Defence of the Republic of Bulgaria**  
**Krassimir Karakachanov**  
**at the opening of the**  
**SYMPOSIUM**  
**Military Mobility – Key to European Security**

Brussels, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my great pleasure to open this symposium dedicated to an exceptionally important project of the Permanent Structured Cooperation Initiative - Military Mobility.

I would like to emphasize that in the context of this project, the top priority for us is the security of the European citizens. In line with the goals set in the EU's Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy and in the context of the risks and threats we face, military mobility is becoming a strategic necessity. This is an issue that should be addressed at the highest level, in order to find pragmatic and workable solutions.

This Symposium is a priority on the agenda of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU. Furthermore, we would like it to be perceived also in another context – as an event of the EU's long-term security and defense agenda.

Nowadays, we live in the most complex external security environment since the end of the Cold War. We face challenges coming both from East and South. Without claiming to cover all of them, I would like to stress on some: increased illegal migration, strengthening of radical movements, activation of international terrorist networks, cyber-threats, and attempts to erode the established international order. The boundaries between internal and external security issues are getting less distinct, the hybrid nature of conflicts

is already established as a rule. Regrettably, in the foreseeable future the power politics will remain part of the security agenda in Europe.

In addition to the external risks and threats, the EU is now facing challenges of internal nature, Brexit being the main example.

Improving military mobility is key to the EU's ability to effectively carry out its Common Security and Defense Policy's operations.

Assuring fast and efficient movement of military contingents and materiel, within and outside EU territory, will enable our Union to effectively react to the challenges of the contemporary highly dynamic strategic environment. At the present time, crossing of national borders within the EU is hampered by a number of administrative and infrastructural impediments. The existence of such obstacles indisputably lead to delays, interruptions, increased expenditures and most of all – higher vulnerabilities to external threats.

All mentioned so far places new and higher requirements to our defence capabilities and furthermore imposes the need to search for new ways to ensure a rapid and unhindered movement of convoys and materiel within and outside of EU territory, should such a need arise.

Military mobility, unquestionably, is a high priority project for NATO as well. Hereby I would like to confirm my belief that military mobility could successfully be considered to play a catalyzing role in the process of practical cooperation between NATO and the EU, all within the context of implementing the June 2016 Warsaw Joint Declaration.

During Bulgaria's presidency, the EU already took important steps aimed at advancing the issue of military mobility. In April, an Action Plan on Military Mobility was

introduced. The main aim of this Plan is to ensure a coordinated and harmonized framework, encompassing current and future programs, projects, initiatives and activities. This will allow us to react more rapidly during both EU and NATO-led missions and operations.

Today's event has an even greater aim – to ensure continuity and lay a sound ground between what had been achieved so far and what needs to be attained in the future. Therefore, we must seek specific working solutions and practical steps in the process of building our European defence.

I firmly believe that this symposium's results will serve in a positive way in our common work to improving military mobility as a very substantial element of the overall Common Security and Defence Policy.

I am confident that this symposium will be a success, allowing us to conduct a free and open discussion, one that will map out and outline a number of practical solutions concerning this highly important issue both for EU and NATO. This could be considered as a tangible contribution by the EDA and the Bulgarian presidency, which we sincerely hope would further be advanced and developed during the upcoming rotational presidencies of the Council of the EU.

I wish success to all of you!