

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ  
OF THE MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE  
December 4, 2008  
Birštonas, Lithuania

The Minister of Defence of the Republic of Estonia, the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Latvia, the Minister of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, as the Ministerial Committee (MC),

Having met in Birštonas, Lithuania on December 3-4, 2008,

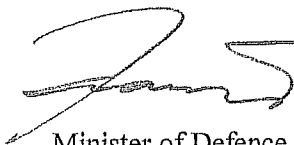
1. Voiced deep concern over the violation of international law and disproportionate use of force by the Russian Federation in Georgia and reiterated their Governments' support to Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Stressed the importance of the single strong stance of NATO and the EU nations regarding the unacceptable actions of third countries as a key mean to resolve conflicts. Stressed that all commitments undertaken by parties, especially those related to the withdrawal of all troops from Georgia, must be implemented in full.
2. Confirmed their continuous support to Georgia's and Ukraine's political, economic, security and defence sector reform leading to the ultimate goal of Georgia's and Ukraine's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance. Stressed the significance of possible extension of the Nordic-Baltic Initiative for regional defence cooperation to Georgia and agreed to work towards this end.
3. Took note of NATO Foreign ministers meeting's communiqué and agreed to offer advice and assistance for Georgia and Ukraine in preparing their respective Annual National Programmes under NUC and NGC.
4. Noted the importance of NATO exercises as a visible and credible tool in safeguarding NATO territory as a whole. Stressed the strengthening and improvement of Host Nation Support (HNS) for NATO exercises in the Baltic countries as a vital precondition for deeper cooperation between Baltic countries as well as with the Alliance.
5. Acknowledged the importance of NRF as a military tool for the full spectrum of operations, including collective defence.
6. Reaffirmed their long-term commitment to the NATO led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operation in Afghanistan. Noted their support to the ISAF efforts in strengthening its role assisting Afghan authorities to assume responsibility over the situation in Afghanistan. Stressed the importance of a more balanced approach in addressing security and development needs throughout Afghanistan.
7. Welcomed the British-French helicopters initiative and recognized it as a good example of practical cooperation between NATO and the EU.
8. Underscored that cooperation rather than merely coordination between Baltic and Nordic countries could become an effective and visible tool in countering contemporary threats in our region and further afield. Expressed the need to work out concrete practical initiatives for direct closer Baltic involvement in the main Nordic cooperation projects.

9. Took note of the progress related to preparation of the Baltic Battalion for NRF-14. Reaffirmed the need to find an effective and sustainable form for the Baltic States' land forces cooperation after the participation of the Baltic Battalion in NRF-14.
10. Stressed the aim to seek the continuation of the current Air policing solution until 2018 and highlighted the constant improvement of HNS as well as expanding of training opportunities. Welcomed the "Baltic Air Sovereignty Training Event" that took place in the Baltic states' airspace on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2008 and called upon the allies to conduct similar exercises regularly.
11. Emphasized the importance of the established Baltic Air Policing Working Group (APWG) and its task to prepare the common analysis on the options of Air policing beyond 2018.
12. Reaffirmed the Baltic States' aim of the practical implementation of "Political guidance on Joint Procurements" in order to increase interoperability of armed forces as the strategic objective and achieve greater economies of scale in time of increasing budgetary pressures.
13. Reaffirmed multinational character as the most important strategic development goal for BALTDEFCOL and highlighted their willingness to improve the conditions for participation in BALTDEFCOL for all nations, including HNS support and inclusion of participating nations in the BALTDEFCOL decision-making.

This Joint Communiqué contains

Annex A: tasks and list of approved documents

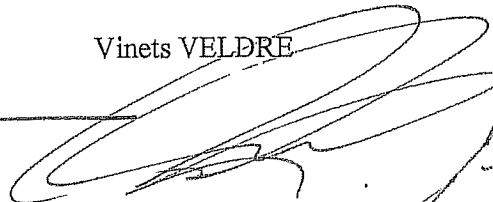
Jaak AAVIKSOO



Minister of Defence  
Republic of Estonia

Date: 04.12.2008

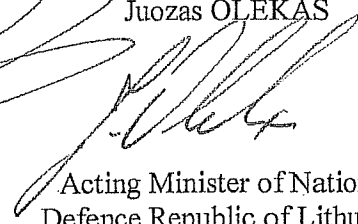
Vinets VELDRE



Minister of Defence  
Republic of Latvia

Date: 04.12.2008

Juozas OLEKAS



Acting Minister of National  
Defence Republic of Lithuania

Date: 04.12.2008