

***Ladies and Gentlemen Ministers, High Representatives of the B9 States,
Distinguished Guests***

We meet today for the first Defence Ministers' Meeting in Bucharest 9 format, in order to discuss security and defence aspects the member countries of this initiative are facing. In this respect, I wish to salute the participation of B9 defence ministers, the high representatives of the USA and NATO. Be welcome to Bucharest!

As you know, B9 initiative was launched by Romania in 2014, as a platform for enhancing dialogue and cooperation among the participating allies, with a view to articulating the specific contributions of these countries to the ongoing processes of the Alliance, according to their experience and expertise and the common security interests.

Together with the Polish defence minister, Mr. Mariusz BLASZCZAK, whom I wish to thank for the substantial assistance in co-organizing this meeting - we have identified the need to extend the B9 format to the defence level, in view of preparing the future NATO Summit, in July, in Brussels.

From our point of view, the convergence of national approaches of the current security and defence issues in the Euro-Atlantic space presupposes a more dedicated cooperation, also by making the most of the various multinational formats.

As the states on the eastern flank of the Alliance share some general and particular concerns, deriving from the perception of the risks and threats to security, we think such topics are best considered in the B9 format, as a stage in preparing and clarifying national positions, in order to define a common view at NATO level, at the Summit in Brussels in July. This can only prove the unity and coherence of the Allies!

There are two aspects I wish to bring to attention.

- On the one hand, ensuring security and defence presupposes an omnidirectional approach, as a security crisis today could involve both conventional and unconventional means, of hybrid or asymmetrical type. That is why, coordination and cooperation are imperative for the

development of the capabilities needed to manage threats and their potential consequences.

- On the other hand, we need to maximize the deterring role of the existing defence means. In this respect, we consider this aspect should be part of the strategic view of the Alliance on medium and long-term. This means, in fact, continuing the efforts to adapt NATO's deterrence and defence posture to today's strategic realities.

We have here a substantial agenda that would allow us to discuss aspects of the current risks and threats to security, the progress made in implementing the decisions made at NATO Summit in Warsaw in 2016 on enhancing the Alliance's deterrence and defence posture, as well as the security priorities in preparing the next allied Summit.

We will also discuss practical aspects involved by the efforts to implement the political decisions concerning adapting NATO's posture, from the perspective of increasing the interoperability and mobility of our military.

Please, allow me to give the floor to Mister Minister Mariusz BLASZCZAK, for his opening remarks.