

2019 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial

March 29, 2019

STATEMENT OF

H.E. Mr. Evangelos Apostolakis

Minister of National Defense of Greece

- Mr. Secretary-General, Dear Colleagues,
- It is an honor for me to address the United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial, here in New York, and I would like to express my gratitude to the UN Secretariat for organizing this very important event.
- The UN is the backbone of global peace and security. Based on this understanding, my country has long been one of the significant contributors to the Organization's peacekeeping missions. The most current figures place us in the 27th position among the UN nations regarding contribution to the peacekeeping budget, and in the 13th position among the EU member states regarding the military forces allocated to the UN peacekeeping missions. We are determined to continue supporting these missions within the range of our means and capabilities. Our strong commitment to UN principles is also emphasized by our strong support to the "Action for Peacekeeping Initiative", as well as Greece's endorsement of the "Declaration of Shared Commitments".
- We deem important that such UN missions are primarily supported by regional actors, who understand the cultural and political sensitivities in the crisis area. It is always the local actors who make the difference by projecting their influence on local communities and facilitating the viability of post-conflict arrangements.

- On our part, we are investing on initiatives which are enhancing stability and security, primarily in our immediate neighborhood, the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean, but also in selected other regions of unrest.
- No doubt, the recent Prespes Agreement serves as a unique example of resolution of a long-standing dispute by peaceful means, and whose purpose is precisely to make Western Balkans a safer place to live. Allow me to extend my deep appreciation for the UN's mediating role in reaching this fair agreement, and I hope that we soon celebrate similar successes for other long disputes around the world.
- On the other hand, we, in cooperation with Cyprus, have built special relationships with important partners in Eastern Mediterranean, such as Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. These multilateral schemes aim to strengthen the political, economic and defense cooperation, which will ultimately serve the purpose of stabilizing an area that has been historically exposed to various security challenges.
- On more practical terms, Greece continues to participate in the Maritime Task Force of the "UN Interim Force in Lebanon" (UNIFIL), and is offering tailored training at the Multinational Peace Support Operations Training Center as well as at the Maritime Interdiction Operations Training Center. Given the special importance that my country pays to the gender perspective a special course dedicated to Gender Aspects is also included to the previously mentioned pledges. Of significant importance is also our positive response to the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) to provide training, so that the Joint Operations Center is in a position to fully implement its mandated tasks. We stand by for further coordination on this matter.
- Moreover, with regard to the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), we believe that its current force composition and Mandate, comprising of a Military, Police and Civilian component, is in line with actual needs on the ground and very much needed.
- In our view, any attempt to change the Mandate or the composition of the Force, could prove detrimental to the status quo on the island and to the overarching objective of restarting negotiations on finding a mutually acceptable solution, from the point they were suspended at the Crans Montana Conference in 2017.

- Furthermore, in case of alterations in the current Mandate of the Peace Keeping Force, there is a tangible danger of witnessing a renewed flare up of tension along the ceasefire lines, as we have seen on numerous instances during the recent past.
- Dear Colleagues, Greece remains committed to supporting the UN's peacekeeping mission, and will make all efforts to provide high-performing capabilities when such necessity arises, together also with our EU, NATO and regional partners.

Thank you.