



## LATVIJAS VALSTS PREZIDENTA KANCELEJA

### PRESS RELEASE

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### **Joint Statement of the Presidents of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on enhanced cooperation in defense and security and resilience building**

We, President of the Republic of Estonia Alar Karis, President of the Republic of Latvia Edgars Rinkēvičs and President of the Republic of Lithuania Gitanas Nausėda, met in Klaipėda on December 6, 2024, for a regular trilateral presidential meeting of the Baltic States and to mark the 10th anniversary of the regional LNG terminal in Klaipėda. We have discussed the most pressing security challenges and threats, primarily those posed by Russia's imperialistic ambitions to fundamentally change Europe's security architecture and revive spheres of influence. It is manifested by Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and brutal war of aggression against Ukraine and increasing malign activities, including sabotage, targeting Allied countries across the Alliance. We have also highlighted our joint stance and actions to enhance Baltic cooperation in defense and security and build our resilience.

Stressing that Russia is and will continue to be the most significant and direct long-term threat to Euro-Atlantic security in all domains and recognizing that Russia's aggression would not stop at Ukraine,

Recognizing the necessity to step up defense spending and emphasizing our commitment of more than 3% of GDP dedicated to defense investment,

Committing to contribute to further strengthening the forward defense posture in the Baltic region in close cooperation with Allies,

Underlining that a strong transatlantic relationship remains irreplaceable for European security and the US presence in the Baltic States underpins our security,

Reiterating that strong national and collective resilience is essential for credible deterrence and defense,

Recognizing that there can be no lasting peace in Europe without Ukraine as an integral part of the Euro-Atlantic security architecture,

Reiterating our commitment to continue providing Ukraine with all possible assistance until Ukraine's victory, as this directly contributes to Euro-Atlantic security,

Recognizing that the People's Republic of China (PRC) has become a decisive enabler of Russia's war against Ukraine and that military assistance provided by the Belarusian, Iranian and North Korean regimes to Russia's war of aggression requires a strong response from Allies and partners,

Noting the importance to further isolate and contain Russia and its accomplices in the international arena,

Stating that the Member States of the European Union and Allies in NATO, as well as our partners, are also confronted by Russia's increasingly dangerous subversive activities,

Acknowledging the strategic importance of critical infrastructure and the urgent need to accelerate its development, interconnectivity and interoperability, and to enhance resilience building, to strengthen its protection,

Recognizing with great satisfaction the excellent cooperation among the Baltic States towards achieving energy independence where critical infrastructure such as the regional LNG terminal in Klaipėda, the Balticconnector, the Gas Interconnector Poland-Lithuania (GIPL), and the Inčukalns underground gas storage play a pivotal role in the gas sector. In the electricity sector, the forthcoming synchronization of the Baltic grid with the Continental European Network on February 9, 2025, will mark another significant milestone, solidifying our energy autonomy and resilience and supporting the transition towards renewable electricity,

Aiming to finally eradicate remaining dependencies on Russian systems in the rail sector, also understanding that our countries need to invest in dual-use transport infrastructure to serve military mobility readiness along NATO's eastern flank,

**We, the Presidents of the Baltic States, jointly:**

**Building our deterrence and defense capabilities, defense industry**

1. Praise the persistent Allied military presence and commitments to the Baltic region, call for the continued implementation of NATO's forward defense on land, in the air and at sea, and stress the need for NATO's proactive approach and large-scale exercises.
2. Express our commitment to invest more than 3% of GDP in our defense capabilities, inviting NATO Allies and EU Member States to do the same and decide to set a new higher defense spending target for NATO Allies, so that Allies would meet the most critical shortfalls, boost allied defense industries and increase resilience countering Russia's expansionism.
3. Stress the urgent need to build a strong Baltic Defense Line in close coordination with Poland's Eastern Shield project. EU and NATO focus and investment is needed to progress quickly in strengthening EU and NATO border security and defense architecture in the Baltic region. In addition, we call to strengthen military mobility to and within the region.
4. Commit to boosting the Baltic defense industry and working together to attract global companies to invest in the region, focusing on the development of innovative defense solutions and technologies, and integrating our SMEs into global supply chains.

5. Aim to ensure a proper geographical balance of EU initiatives aimed at boosting the defense industry's readiness, leading to stronger regional capacities along the eastern border of the EU.
6. Given the strategic role of the Baltic States as EU Member States with the EU's immediate external border and the need for additional investments for building resilience and relevant infrastructure, we call on the EU to adjust and ensure flexibility of future EU cohesion policy measures for the Baltic States to address real time challenges in our countries facing direct threats from Russia.

### **Supporting Ukraine**

7. Remain committed to fulfilling the assumed obligation to allocate at least 0.25 percent of GDP per year for Ukraine's military aid.
8. Commit to further promote effective and synchronized military assistance to Ukraine, including through the European Peace Facility, EU Ammunition Initiative, EU Military Assistance Mission in Support of Ukraine, and EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform in Ukraine, as well as through NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine and the Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine.
9. Remain committed to supporting Ukraine on its irreversible path to membership in NATO, with an invitation for Ukraine to join NATO as soon as possible. We strongly support Ukraine's membership in the EU and call for fast and efficient EU accession negotiations with Ukraine.
10. Call on the international community to fully support the Peace Formula proposed by President Zelenskyy, prioritizing Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and holding Russia accountable. We support the Victory Plan presented by President Zelenskyy in pursuit of a just and sustainable peace.

### **Sanctions**

11. Remain committed to maintaining a strong and steady collective pressure on Russia and Belarus through our joint EU sanctions proposals, targeting their primary revenue sources, access to defense materials. We urge more robust sanctions and measures against all Russia's accomplices, especially in the light of the recent deployment of North Korean troops to fight against Ukraine, and Chinese and Iranian military supplies and co-production supporting Russia's aggression.
12. Continue cooperation on the strict and uniform implementation of existing restrictive measures and tackling the circumvention of sanctions, leading by example with our regional measures. We also call for further actions by the EU and its Member States to halt Russia's military by stopping business with Russia and Belarus and by introducing new import tariffs on Russian and Belarusian products.

### **Response to hybrid and kinetic threats and resilience building**

13. In response to Russia's hostile hybrid operations, further bolster our resilience and work within the EU and NATO to develop respective toolboxes to identify, prevent and respond to hybrid threats. In this context, we note the importance of robust EU-NATO cooperation and welcome the adoption of the new EU sanctions regime against Russia's activities.

14. Look forward to the implementation of the NATO Washington Summit taskings to contain and contest Russia's aggressive actions and to counter its ability to conduct malign and destabilizing activities against NATO, its Allies and partners. We will actively contribute to developing NATO's strategic approach to Russia and call on the EU institutions to work on an EU strategy on how to deter and respond to all hybrid threats posed by Russia.
15. Stand committed to further strengthening the common external border of the EU and NATO to prevent hybrid threats, including the instrumentalization of migration for political purposes by the hostile neighboring regimes, through national resources and further joint funding by the EU. We call for more joint funding by the EU, with NATO providing security and defense support where necessary.
16. Use effectively all the tools provided by the Net-Zero Industry Act to reduce the dependency of our manufacturers and service providers on Chinese state-controlled and financed supply chains and to close any cyber or management threat gaps.

### **Critical infrastructure – development and protection**

17. Remain committed to implementing cross-border infrastructure and cooperation projects to strengthen energy independence and diversify supply. We welcome the discussions to jointly evaluate the potential of establishing an energy hub in the Baltic States to integrate excess renewable energy and provide green energy production at competitive prices.
18. Stress the urgent need to increase the level of resilience of the Baltic States' critical energy infrastructure nationally and through enhanced regional cooperation, including joint exercises and best practice sharing, also using EU funding.
19. Call for intensifying efforts to complete the integration of transport networks into the EU network. Rail Baltica is essential for the competitiveness and connectivity of the Baltics, as well as for the region's security and deterrence. Therefore, we aim to work together for increased funding for Rail Baltica and other projects relevant to military mobility, with the help of continued EU co-funding in the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2028-2034.
20. Committed to secure and resilient railway infrastructure and its management system as an integral part, we declare our support for the full "desynchronization" of our railways from the Russian-controlled technological, IT and data-based railway system by embracing the Free Rail cooperation framework to build a secure intra-Baltic system, protected from foreign interference.
21. Call on the EU prioritize the development of appropriate instruments to address financing gaps for strategic infrastructure projects to enable their smooth implementation and continuity in the long-term.
22. Continue to develop the Three Seas Initiative as a platform to strengthen the transatlantic bond as well as foster collaboration with other allies and trusted partners to work towards closing the infrastructure investment gap in our region.