

Osvrt s konferencije u Strugi

“Regional Approach to Smart Defence and Sharing and Pooling Initiatives – Possibilities and Directions“, a conference organized by the Euro-Atlantic Council of Macedonia, was held in October in Struga, Macedonia, and was dedicated to the discussion on challenges the NATO is facing today, and how important it is to distribute the financial burden equally between the allies, but also between the countries in the region of the Western Balkans. The conclusion was that cooperation was the only way to overcome individual weaknesses and new security challenges.

According to certain calculations, the NATO has lost 45 billion euro in defence spending since 2008, so the member countries should realize that defence spending is not expenditure, but investment. Internal efforts for smart defence are not always connected to economic crises, but also to threats. Security threats have become unpredictable, related more to non-state actors. Therefore, it was concluded that defence should be organized so as to be cost-effective and, more importantly, efficient. A major challenge for countries in the region is still the historic burden they carry from the past, and once they overcome it, it will be easier to cope with building common defence capabilities. Another problem is the difference in the levels of development of defence systems, and Kosovo, as Deputy Minister of Kosovo Forces and President of the Atlantic Council of Kosovo Bejtush Gashi stated, sees fulfilment of updating the security system to satisfy the NATO's standards in 10 years' time, so that Kosovo has voluntary, professional and multi-ethnic forces. Bosnia and Herzegovina has a problem with differences in opinions whether it should enter the NATO or not. According to research, 95 per cent of Bosniaks and Croats in BiH want to join the NATO, and only 35 per cent of the citizens of the Republika Srpska share the same attitudes toward the NATO.

One of the main conclusions was that the region needed a rapid change in the mind set, to be able to perform in a way for every country to trust its neighbours. Ljube Dukoski, State Advisor for Policy and Planning in the Ministry of Defence of Macedonia, stated that they should take the lessons learned, such as the fact that full cooperation with the NATO needs political commitment in the country; public support, legal framework, strategic framework, development of interoperable deployable capacities and armed forces professionalization. These should be the goals of cooperation among A5 countries. Regional approach to common defence and regional cooperation is nece-

ssary for the region to become more efficient and cost-effective, President of the Euro-Atlantic Council of Macedonia Ismet Ramadani concluded.

Jason Wiseman, Secretary General Designate of the Atlantic Treaty Association, expressed his concern, discussed at the Summit in Wales, and related to European decline in spending for military purposes, which could lead to the decline in world standing. Majority of European countries are under the NATO rule of 2 per cent of GDB spending for military. Recommendations for better regional cooperation are to reduce overlaps in R&D, identify areas of expertise of each country so that there are no overlaps and that every country could specialize in what it does best. Another recommendation is to coordinate intelligence and cyber security resources, which leads toward creating a joint think tank and promoting outreach to civil society.

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