



Weekly Briefing

**Romania external relations briefing:
Romania's achievements following the NATO Summit in Vilnius
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Romania's achievements following the NATO Summit in Vilnius

Romania took part in the NATO Summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, in mid-July, eagerly expected given the security issues following the Russia's war against Ukraine. Romania managed to fulfil its objectives and is ensured that NATO has a suitable response for any security threat, following the new defence plans which were adopted. More defence capacity is ensured by increasing the number of the troops present, more integration is achieved by increased collaboration in different sectors, while the Black Sea is recognized as a region with strategic importance, which will also focus the Alliance's attention on the security problems from this part of the world. As a result of Romania's requests, NATO also mentioned that political and practical support and assistance for strengthening the defence capabilities is provided to the Republic of Moldova.

Introduction

The leaders of the North Atlantic Alliance met in mid-July in Vilnius, Lithuania, in a summit with huge stakes in the actual security context. The main issues discussed concerned the support given to Ukraine, its accession to NATO, the increase of the military presence in Eastern Europe, and, considered the most important, the approval of a new generation of defence plans that NATO will apply. The Summit was considered to have a special significance, especially that it was expected to shape the response of the Euro-Atlantic community to the security environment affected by Russia's war against Ukraine.

Romania had a deep interest in the discussions, hoping to enhance the security in the Black Sea region. For fulfilling these aims, Romanian President indicated¹ the need to continue the implementation of the decisions from the Madrid Summit that took place in 2022 in order to ensure the coherent deterrence and defence posture on the entire Eastern Flank and to achieve a true Forward Defence. In addition, he intended to ask for the adoption of a package to strengthen the allied position on the Eastern Flank in the long term that could provide Romania a higher degree of security and defence, and to continue the support for Ukraine especially in

¹ Romanian Presidency, 2023. *Participarea Președintelui României, Klaus Iohannis, la Summitul NATO de la Vilnius (11-12 iulie 2023)*, <https://www.presidency.ro/ro/media/comunicate-de-presa/participarea-presedintelui-romaniei-klaus-iohannis-la-summitul-nato-de-la-vilnius-11-12-iulie-2023> (accessed 15 August 2023).

making progress towards its accession to NATO, as well as for more vulnerable partners, such as the Republic of Moldova.

General achievements that regard Romania

Initially intended to adopt specific measures for the implementation of the decisions previously taken during 2022, the Summit in Vilnius left a strong mark in developing the relationship with the member countries, being considered as important in accelerating the transformation of the military posture and having a large impact on the future transformation of NATO partnerships². NATO members agreed on modern regional defence plans that could counterattack Russian offenses. The three regions include the North (Atlantic and Arctic areas), the Centre (Baltic and Central Europe), and the South (Mediterranean and Black Sea). It is for the first time in NATO history that there is a concrete permanent operational plan for the defence of NATO territory and planning between national and allied defence³. In addition, the Alliance's Rapid Reaction Force is to increase from 40,000 troops to 300,000. More than that, NATO will also provide guidance to states on how to modernize their forces and logistics.

In this context, Romania's role "at the confluence of areas of great strategic importance for NATO and the European Union" was highlighted, according to Mircea Geoană, Deputy Secretary General of NATO. The Summit also brought high value in the way in which the country prepares for possible unpleasant situations, as there are more troops of NATO countries deployed to NATO military commanders in case of crisis or conflict. According to the decisions, the battle group in Romania will be easily augmented to the brigade level by gaining reinforcements when needed. Future troops from France and Spain are to be permanently dislocated on the Romanian territory. So far, allied military forces from the USA, France, Belgium, Portugal, Poland and North Macedonia are present in Romania.

Romania's results

Romania participated in the Summit with the hope of taking additional decisions regarding deterrence and defence on the Eastern Flank. The desired measures aimed at medium

²Lupițu, R., 2023. NATO "Un nivel superior de protecție și apărare" – Mizele României la summitul de la Vilnius: Planuri de apărare premieră în istoria NATO, protejarea infrastructurii Mării Negre, sprijin aliat pentru R. Moldova și hub-ul pentru piloții F-16, <https://www.caleaeuropeana.ro/un-nivel-superior-de-protectie-si-aparare-mizele-romaniei-la-summitul-de-la-vilnius-planuri-de-aparare-premera-in-istoria-nato-protejarea-infrastructurii-marii-negre-sprijin-aliat-pentru-r/> (accessed 15 August 2023).

³ Idem 2

and long-term military adaptation and at ensuring the forces, capabilities, plans and structures necessary for an effective, coherent and united Forward Defence on the entire Eastern Flank⁴. Also, an important objective of Romania aimed at political and practical support for Ukraine, as well as making concrete progress towards its accession to NATO.

Following the end of the Summit, President Klaus Iohannis announced that Romania has fulfilled the objectives⁵ set at the NATO Summit in Vilnius and that, through the new defence plans, the North Atlantic Alliance has a suitable response for any security threat that could affect Romania: “The adopted decisions provide Romania with a higher level of protection and defence, they will solidly anchor our country in the Allied deterrence and defence architecture and they will concretely demonstrate the character of a region of strategic importance for the Black Sea Alliance”⁶.

NATO’s modernization for a new stage of collective defence have several implications⁷ for Romania. First of all, it involves a multi-domain deterrence and defence, meaning that operational domains are integrated, and air and missile defence, cyber, space, land and maritime forces are fully interoperable. It also includes a new generation of defence plans, doubled by the long-term commitment to increase defence investments. As regards the commitment to increase investments in defence, Romania has already decided this year to allocate 2.5% of GDP in this area, while the threshold established at NATO level indicated a minimum of 2% of GDP. More than that, following the Summit, Romania agreed to continue national efforts to strengthen defence as well as the contributions to the Alliance’s deterrence and defence measures and activities, to the allied missions and to the effort to modernize command and control structures.

Romania also drew NATO’s attention on the Black Sea region⁸, which remains of strategic importance for Euro-Atlantic security. NATO agreed on the need to monitor and evaluate the security environment in the Black Sea area, mentioning for the first time Black Sea itself in a distinct paragraph in the Final Declaration following Romania’s request. The paragraph is related to allied efforts in the region to ensure security, safety, stability and

⁴ Cozmei, V., 2023. *Summitul NATO de la Vilnius: Care sunt mizele la întâlnirea de vârf a alianței și ce își propune România să obțină*, <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-defense-26388546-summitul-nato-vilnius-care-sunt-mizele-intalnirea-varf-alianței-și-propune-romania-obtina.htm> (accessed 15 August 2023).

⁵ Romanian Presidency, 2023. *Declarație de presă susținută de Președintele României, Klaus Iohannis, la finalul Summitului NATO de la Vilnius*, <https://www.presidency.ro/ro/media/declaratii-de-presa/declaratie-de-presa-sustinuta-de-presedintele-romaniei-klaus-iohannis-la-finalul-summitului-nato-de-la-vilnius> (accessed 15 August 2023).

⁶ Matei, C. 2023. *Ce înseamnă pentru România summit-ul NATO de la Vilnius: ”Un nivel superior de protecție și apărare”*, <https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/politic/ce-inseamna-pentru-romania-summit-ul-nato-de-la-vilnius-un-nivel-superior-de-protectie-si-aparare.html> (accessed 16 August 2023).

⁷ Idem 6

⁸ Idem 5

freedom of navigation. Experts indicate that the envisaged measures will strengthen the protection of the submarine infrastructure and exploitation facilities in the continental shelf, as well as the increase of energy security. More than that, Romania will take steps towards joining the Program on Airspace Security in the Black Sea region, run by a NATO Agency⁹.

Other very specific measures envisage¹⁰:

- The establishment of a regional training hub for Romanian F-16 pilots, together with the Netherlands and other international partners, dedicated to Allied and Ukrainian pilots, in order to strengthen air defence.
- The creation, together with Bulgaria, of a Regional Command dedicated to special forces, which is open to Allies and partners.
- Supporting Ukraine, by continuing to train Ukrainian soldiers in the framework of the European Union's military assistance mission in support of Ukraine.
- A new financial contribution for the Republic of Moldova, which we be transferred to the NATO Voluntary Fund dedicated to this county.

Romania's achievements also targeted increased support for the Republic of Moldova, which was for the first time invited to join such an event, which proves the increased importance of the neighbouring country in the security game in the region. Romania continuously draw the attention on Moldova's vulnerability, supporting its process to become an EU and NATO member. While for Ukraine, the NATO members agreed on simplifying the accession procedures and shortening the time in which the country can become a NATO member, for Moldova the issue is simpler. According to President Iohannis, the Republic of Moldova has the status of neutrality in the Constitution. When the situation will be changed, the adhesion can be discussed without other obstacles to be invoked¹¹. More than that, support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country is noted in NATO's final declaration, where Russia is asked to withdraw its forces from Transnistria. NATO also expresses its political and practical support and offers assistance for strengthening the defence capabilities of the Republic of Moldova¹², Romania being the country that coordinates the defence capacity strengthening package for the Republic of Moldova, a NATO defence capability building initiative.

⁹ Idem 6

¹⁰ Idem 5

¹¹ Ștefănescu, S., 2023. *Apărarea înaintată a NATO conferă siguranță României*, <https://www.dw.com/ro/vilnius-ap%C4%83rarea-%C3%AEnaintat%C4%83-a-nato-confer%C4%83-siguran%C8%9B%C4%83-rom%C3%A2niei/a-66190455> (accessed 16 August 2023).

¹² Fati, S., 2023. *Opinie: Ce câștigă România după Vilnius*, <https://www.dw.com/ro/opinie-ce-c%C3%A2%C8%99tig%C4%83-rom%C3%A2nia-dup%C4%83-vilnius/a-66197097> (accessed 16 August 2023).

Conclusions

It is clear that Romania had several important achievements following the Summit. Firstly, the adopted decisions provide Romania with a higher level of protection and defence. Secondly, Romania is better integrated in the deterrence and defence architecture of the Alliance, given the modernization of NATO's collective defence. Thirdly, the Black Sea is recognized as a region with strategic importance, which will also focus the Alliance's attention on the security problems from this part of the world. While the gaining foresees an even greater defence capacity for Romania of an increased consistency, the fears are that there is a growing danger on the Alliance's eastern borders for which NATO's countries should be prepared.