Approved by the Cabinet of Ministers
24 May 2016

Adopted by Saeima /Parliament/
16 June 2016

THE NATIONAL DEFENCE CONCEPT

Riga, 2016

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Introduction

1. The National Defence Concept is a policy planning document prepared on the basis of the military threat analysis. It defines the strategic goals, core principles, priorities and general measures undertaken for defence of the state during times of peace, threats and war.

2. The National Defence Concept has been developed pursuant to Article 29 of the Law on National Security and is based on the military threat analysis. The National Defence Concept has been developed taking into account geopolitical situation of Latvia, national security and foreign policy goals as well as obligations of Latvia within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (hereinafter - NATO) and in the European Union (hereinafter - the EU).

3. The National Defence Concept is the basis for national defence policy. Political and operational measures, allocation of necessary resources, development of the National Armed Forces (hereinafter – NAF) are all based on the National Defence Concept. Cooperation amongst executive authorities, state administration, local municipalities, as well as the readiness and actions undertaken by individual and legal entities during times of peace, threats and war, are outlined in the National Defence Concept. Implementation of the national defence measures will be ensured in accordance with available resources, effecting functions and tasks of the NAF that are stipulated by law.

1. International Security Environment

4. The current international security environment is characterised by interdependence amongst states, rapid change with outcomes that are difficult to predict and by the diversity of security challenges. Security challenges arise both from states and non-governmental organisations that use both conventional and asymmetric warfare elements. The world is becoming increasingly multipolar and sooner or later this may lead to changes in the existing international order.

5. Together with the NATO and the EU allies, Latvia has faced the deterioration of the European security environment caused by the Russian aggression in Ukraine. By changing the internationally recognised borders and not complying with assumed international commitments, Russia is destroying the existing international order.

6. To ensure internal stability and unite its society, Russia creates and promotes the image of an external threat to its society in which NATO and the EU are portrayed as the main sources of threat. This is attested also by the Russian National Security Strategy approved on 31 December 2015. Russia continues to undertake military activities outside its territory, for example, in Syria, in a way that is contrary to the interests of NATO and the EU.

7. Russian foreign policy is a continuation of its domestic policy. The current Russian policy confirms that Russia is prepared to reach its goals regarding its neighbouring countries by any means, including the use of military force to enforce its foreign policy and security orientation.

8. As a country of the Baltic Sea Region Latvia is most directly affected by what is happening in this region. Contrary to the declared values and commitments undertaken in the core documents defining the relationship between the NATO and Russia, during recent years Russia has extensively developed its military infrastructure and has been demonstrating its military power in the direct vicinity of Latvia’s border. Russia is striving to expand its military presence in Belarus and this in turn is strengthening Russia’s capacity to act in NATO’s eastern flank.

9. By improving rapid response capabilities, mobility and combat readiness of the Russian Armed Forces, by developing the commando and special task forces and by providing modernised combat vehicles to its armed forces in the border area with the Baltic countries, Russia is creating challenges to the defence of the Baltic countries.

10. Thus, taking into account the trends within Russian internal affairs, the increasing military presence in the vicinity of NATO and the demonstrated Russian willingness to use military force for achieving political goals, threats to Latvia's security during the validity period of this Concept are increasing.

11. It is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between times of peace, crisis and war within the current security environment. The elements of asymmetric warfare are often difficult to identify; they are generally intended to weaken the state, discredit its political administration and undermine the trust in one's country. Various elements of "soft" and "hard" power are used to undermine sovereign countries by means of the so-called hybrid warfare.

12. Since regaining of independence, Latvia has been under assault from various elements of asymmetric warfare which have intensified in recent years. Constantly increasing attempts by Russia to erode the security of Latvia using various methods can be identified. Artificially coordinated and managed communication (propaganda), psychological indoctrination, attacks in cyberspace, use of the energy industry to attain political goals, sabotaging of the economic and business environment by means of the imposition of artificial trade barriers and prohibitions, the provision of support to agents of influence and encouragement of public dissatisfaction, military activities close to the border of Latvia — all these are the elements of asymmetric warfare implemented by Russia.

13. Russian rhetoric and military activities demonstrate Russia's intention to degrade the trust in NATO's capacity to act and its efficiency, as well as Russia's desire to split and weaken the unity of NATO countries by positioning itself as an alternative security guarantor on the global scale. Militarily Russia develops and exercises capabilities that can be used to launch an unexpected military attack against the Baltic countries that would split them from the rest of the NATO and obstruct implementation of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, as well as to prevent NATO from securing dominance in the sea and air.

14. Significant security challenges are created by the increasing instability in Europe's neighbouring regions, flows of illegal immigration and other cross-border threats, especially terrorism. Terrorist groups like DAESH (the self-proclaimed terrorist organisation Islamic State in Iraq and Levant) represent a serious threat to the security within the Greater Middle East and are creating challenges for allies and partners worldwide. Although this does not represent a direct military threat to Latvia, there is still a risk to the safety of NAF personnel who participate in international military missions and operations. The threat of terrorism and migration is intensifying in the NATO and EU region, therefore joint and coordinated action by the allies is required. That can only be achieved by strengthening the unity and solidarity of NATO and the EU.

15. At the same time, security threats also result from the consequences of the economic crisis. It contributed to social inequality and the decrease in population, which in turn increases the domestic and external vulnerability of Latvia to external threats.

2. General Basis of National Defence

16. The purpose of the national defence system is preservation of Latvia's national independence and sovereignty. Preservation of national independence and sovereignty is

possible by engaging the entire society, by the government's ability to act and the military force. National defence is the responsibility of the entire society, state institutions and the national defence system.

17. Integrity, willingness, and unity of the people of Latvia for joint resistance are an integral expression of civic self-confidence and national identity of Latvia that have formed historically and that create a unique and strong foundation for the national defence against any kind of aggressors.

18. It is the task of the state to develop a national defence system that will ensure the survival of Latvia as a state and will in a timely manner deter, prevent and if necessary eliminate threats. State power's capacity to act, its efficient functioning and continuity will contribute to the achievement of this task. The state must promote and organise national military defence, promote civic confidence and provide for direct, voluntary and broad involvement in national defence. In case of external aggression, the state uses and implements individual self-defence and collective defence rights and mechanisms adhering to the principles and order stipulated in international agreements, national and international laws and regulations.

19. The foundation of national military defence is the NAF. The NAF ensures national military defence and provides support to civil society during peacetime and undertakes other assignments in accordance with laws and international treaties.

3. Strategic Principles of National Defence

20. National defence is implemented according to the following strategic principles:

21. **State's capacity and will to act**. In a situation when threats are changing and difficult to predict, the ability of the state power to anticipate potential threats and to respond thereto must be developed. Early warning and identification of threats, information exchange and inter-institutional cooperation are necessary to ensure the efficient adoption of decisions. The willingness of society to participate in national defence and the protection of Latvian sovereignty verifies that Latvia will defend its independence if it is threatened.

22. **Deterrence policy as a mean for minimising external military threats**. It is the objective of national defence to deter an adversary from their intention to use military force. An efficient deterrence policy takes the form of a set of measures that will demonstrate to a potential adversary that the price of engaging in a military conflict against Latvia will be high and will outweigh any potential political, economic or military gains. This is ensured by the sum of individual and collective defence capabilities of all NATO countries, including Latvia, and allied willingness and commitment to provide mutual assistance in case of an attack. The presence of allied forces in Latvia contributes to the effectiveness of deterrence.

23. **Implementation of national defence and overcoming of external threats.** National defence will be implemented as a form of collective defence; first by developing the national resistance and military capabilities against an external threat, secondly by continuing integration into NATO at operational and tactical levels and thirdly by using the collective and individual military potential of NATO countries. In any case of military threat, the national defence system must be able to implement defence measures by organising and managing military and civic resistance, continued functioning of the state administration and defence of the critical infrastructure.

3.1. State's Capacity and Will to Act

3.1.1. Situational Awareness and Threat Identification

24. Institutions tasked with overcoming threats to the national security must continuously be aware of, analyse and be able to identify external threats in a timely manner, thus providing time to decision-makers to respond. It is the task of the state to improve the abilities of these institutions to identify external threats.

25. There is a high probability that Latvia will have to face not only attempts to destabilise the state using asymmetric warfare but also military-related disinformation strategies. For the purpose of identification of threats in a timely manner, analytical abilities need to be developed in order to process high volume of information and to be able to operate within the environment where false, hardly verifiable and contradictory information is disseminated.

26. Intelligence and counter-intelligence capabilities and their technical provisions must be sufficient for decision-makers to obtain the maximum amount of information regarding ongoing events in the territory of Latvia, particularly, in the border areas.

27. In addition to the existing cooperation mechanisms, exchange of intelligence information and action coordination both among the NATO states and the Baltic States must be developed further.

28. Establishment of pre-approved actions will reduce response time in case of a threat.

29. The state informs society on what actions should civilians undertake during a military conflict.

3.1.2. Inter-institutional Cooperation

30. Implementation of the national defence measures will be achieved by simultaneously using both civil and military national and international resources and by defining the responsible institution in compliance with the threat scenarios in a flexible manner. In compliance with the procedure defined by the Cabinet of Ministers, the Ministry of Defence may act as the leading institution in order to counter covert military threats in peacetime within a specific area and for the purpose of attaining a certain goal.

31. Public administration institutions are responsible for the identification and overcoming of threats within their relevant areas. The Cabinet of Ministers will coordinate and manage this process.

32. In order to respond to challenges efficiently, continuous cooperation and readiness of all state administration institutions are necessary for the elimination of threats. Regular training in crisis management procedures for officials at the government level and responsible institutions will ensure response in a timely manner.

33. Efficient information exchange and provision of information to the government regarding possible threats in a timely manner are preconditions for successful national defence.

34. Efficient control of the national external border is an important factor for ensuring both early warning and national defence. Thus, the management of the national external land border must be developed as an integrated set of civil and military measures with integrated command management, compatible technologies, procedures and response capabilities during both peacetime and in threat situation. The State Border Guard, which will form part of the NAF during wartime, must be compatible with the NAF units in terms of equipment, training and procedures.

3.1.3. Civic Engagement in National Defence

35. National consciousness and will of the people of Latvia to protect their country must be encouraged in order to strengthen national defence. Latvia can defend itself even when facing an adversary with military superiority. Everything is determined by the nation's willpower and the military strategy employed. The geography of Latvia enables restriction of adversary's freedom of action and possibility to cause maximum damage to it.

36. National defence is unconditional. It is the duty of each citizen to defend their country and to resist an aggressor in an active or passive manner.

37. Patriotism is promoted by the visibility and presence of the armed forces in all the regions of Latvia, the prestige of the military profession, trust in the NAF and awareness of the need for national defence. Provision of support to civil society by participating in parades, public events and by organising exercises in populated places ensures the visibility of the NAF in society.

38. Patriotism is promoted by the intellectual and physical education of youth and their understanding of the history of Latvia.

39. The National Guard and the Youth Guard are the primary tools for involving society in national defence. Broad public involvement will be ensured by the accessibility and attractiveness of these institutions.

40. The National Guard is the biggest structural unit of the NAF with the broadest representation across the country. The National Guard provides an opportunity to voluntarily serve one's country by ensuring its security and defence. Integration of the National Guard within the joint structure of the NAF is considered to be one of the core elements of implementation of the NAF development plan, thus securing resource-efficient personnel planning.

41. The objective of the Youth Guard is to recruit 10% of school-age youth by 2024. The objective for 2018 is to provide an opportunity for 6% school youth aged 10 - 21 years (approximately 9500 youth) to take part in the Youth Guard.

42. Training of reserve soldiers has been renewed by integrating the reserve soldiers in wartime structures of the permanent NAF units.

43. The state is offering the opportunity to learn basics of national defence in general education establishments.

3.1.4. Information Space and Cyber Security

44. Information space and information technologies have influence on the functioning of the society during peacetime and during situations of hybrid and conventional war.

45. Reinforcement of strategic communication capabilities at the level of sectoral ministries and government, as well as effective inter-sectoral coordination is important for security of the information space.

46. It is Latvia's interest to ensure that norms of democracy and freedom are not misused to influence Latvia's society in order to undermine trust in the state authority of Latvia and the core values of Europe and reduce the willingness of the population to defend Latvia. Therefore, protection of the Latvian state identity and core values is ensured in Latvian information space. Any form of incitement promoting war, hatred, intolerance and denial of the core values underlying the existence of the state of Latvia are prohibited.

47. During a crisis or war the information and communication technologies of the state and private sector may be subject to cyber-attacks. Therefore, it is the aim of the state to

ensure that its administration and the private sector are aware of potential cyberspace threats and risks; are equipped with the capabilities to identify pernicious activities and the state has the technical and human resources for preventing or minimising the impact of malicious activities. The state is promoting close cooperation between the state and private sector in order to enhance the security and defence of cyberspace, including provisions for the defence of the critical infrastructure. In order to increase the security of information and communication technologies and to promote the responsibility of the system developers and holders, simultaneously involving broader society, a policy of thorough identification of vulnerabilities will be introduced.

48. During crisis and war, the government provides for the defence of its information space and cyberspace by using active and passive defence measures in order to prevent external agents influencing the population and paralysing the government.

49. In order to promote awareness and to provide support in modern threat situations, special units are formed and training in cyber defence is provided both to the National Guard and the Youth Guard.

3.2. Deterrence Policy as a Mean for Reduction of External Military Threats

3.2.1. NATO Capacity and Allied Presence in Latvia

50. The collective defence principle of NATO and the capabilities maintained by the allies both jointly and individually ensure the deterrence of aggressors. Existence of a strong and united NATO is in Latvia's interests.

51. Deterrence is enhanced by the presence of the allied forces in Latvia; the extent of their presence depends on our mutual solidarity, including the contribution provided by Latvia.

52. Efficient combination of the alliance's nuclear weapons, ballistic missile defence and conventional weapons serves as the basis of the alliance's capabilities and as the guarantee for deterrence. Maintenance of the alliance's nuclear arsenal as well as support to the current placement of the alliance's nuclear weapons in Europe is imperative to retain NATO's nuclear capacity and is in Latvia's interests as long as nuclear weapons exist in the world.

53. Creation of the ballistic missile defence shield in Europe contributes to the alliance's defence potential and it needs to be further adapted to suit the security situation.

54. A credible and effective deterrence policy of the alliance is ensured by its ability to react to an increasing threat by taking decisions in a timely manner within Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which stipulates that NATO states will consult together whenever in the opinion of any of them the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the parties is threatened.

55. The NATO Response Force and Very High Readiness Joint Task Force are NATO's primary means of response in crisis situations and these should also be employed during peacetime for the purposes of deterrence. Latvia is interested in making the NATO decision-making mechanism as efficient as possible by ensuring prompt re-grouping of forces, well-defined policies of intent and clear definition of the range of authority of the NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe.

56. Latvia is interested in achieving a long term solution for the substantial allied military presence in Latvia. Deterrence benefits from the continuous rotational presence of the allied forces on land, at sea and in the air. This requires the coordination of military training and exercise cycles in a centralised manner and the expansion of combat and combat support capabilities as well as the development of military infrastructure for ensuring exercises and dislocation of combat equipment of the allied forces.

57. The NATO Baltic Air Policing mission enhances the defence of the Baltic air space. Participation of the allied forces in this mission attests to the presence and solidarity of NATO.

58. Latvia is interested in the establishment of NATO institutions and command and control elements in Latvia, as this contributes to both further integration of Latvia within NATO and the allied presence. Establishment of a NATO command centre in Latvia (the NATO Force Integration Unit) allows for coordinating and practically supporting NATO combat formation for their operations in the region during military exercises or operations.

59. The NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence strengthens the resilience of the alliance and Latvia to challenges caused by threats of asymmetric warfare. Its operation in Latvia is simultaneously a visible example of allied presence and Latvia's contribution to the alliance.

3.2.2. National Deterrence Capabilities

60. The state ensures maintenance of the high readiness forces during peacetime with the ability to rapidly increase the extent of these forces to the level required for deterrence or warfare. Readiness of the forces is achieved by organising combat readiness evaluations and exercises at various levels, by training crisis management procedures and by improving the response capabilities of units and the NAF command.

61. The NAF command and control must be able to operate in a decentralised manner so that each commander of a unit and a sub-unit is able to independently assess the tactical situation and to select the best operational response. Units should be able to perform combat operations autonomously ensuring delay of the adversary, restricting its capability to act and undermining its strategy.

62. Rearmament of the National Guard units, decentralisation of weapon storage and compatibility with the regular NAF units enhance deterrence capabilities. Relevant labour relations policy contributes to the combat capabilities of the National Guard, including a flexible approach of employers to release their employees to participate in National Guard exercises and permission to National Guards and reserve soldiers employed in the public administration to attend paid exercises during working hours.

3.2.3. Strengthening of Strategic Partnerships

63. United States of America (USA) is the major strategic cooperation partner for Latvia whose support enhances national security and defence of the country. Latvia aims to improve the USA awareness of the geopolitical challenges to Latvia and of the political will to defend Latvia within the framework of the collective defence policy, as well as to achieve military presence of the USA in Latvia.

64. To ensure the support of the USA with regard to the security interests of Latvia, cooperation with the USA takes place at the executive, legislative and military levels. In addition to cooperation at the national level, closer cooperation with the USA non-governmental organisations contributes to the representation of the Latvian security interests in the USA.

65. In order to achieve more efficient involvement of the USA in Latvian security and defence activities, Latvia must cooperate in the military industrial sector by means of defence procurements; demonstrate solidarity by participating in USA led military operations; develop military interoperability with USA.

66. The aim of the Baltic States cooperation is to further military integration in order to resist security challenges in a synchronised and coordinated manner. This requires mutual reliance and trust, establishment of joint command elements, coordinated development

and interoperability. Common security challenges create the necessity for the coordinated defence policy of the Baltic States and Poland.

67. United Kingdom – a major military power of the Northern Europe with a nuclear deterrent capability shares a similar regional threat assessment to that of Latvia. Further cooperation with the United Kingdom will provide additional security guarantees for Latvia and contribute to the national defence capability.

68. Latvia is interested in close cooperation with the Nordic States in order to strengthen the common security of the Baltic Sea region. Cooperation takes place in the form of information exchange, shared understanding of security challenges and implementation of joint capability projects and activities.

69. Willingness of such countries as Germany and France to participate in Latvian defence measures strengthens Latvia's security. Therefore it is Latvia's interests to further develop cooperation with these countries.

3.2.4. Participation in the International Security Policy

70. The aim of Latvia's security policy is to further integration and protection of Latvia's interests in international organisations. Responsible commitment to international obligations and their fulfilment contribute to the national security. Comprehensive international cooperation is an additional tool for upholding national defence interests.

71. NATO is the security guarantee for Latvia. Latvia pursues its security and defence policy interests by contributing to collective defence, participating in measures for the resolution of international crises situations and by promoting security in cooperation with its allies and partners.

72. The strength of the EU is a set of non-military instruments, which contribute to Latvia's capability to resist a non-military threat. Balanced use of these instruments and the comprehensive involvement of most EU institutions in resolving security and defence problems is a precondition for combating the elements of asymmetric warfare, including the strengthening of internal security and media space.

73. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) contributes to crisis management and promotes transparency in military planning and arms control. Compliance with the declared OSCE principles is a precondition for achieving a stable and predictable security situation in Europe.

74. The United Nations provides an opportunity to contribute to the resolution of global security challenges, thus enhancing the image of Latvia as a security promoter.

75. Latvia's awareness and participation in the resolution of current challenges NATO and EU are facing, including those, which do not directly affect the security of Latvia, promotes solidarity and ensures unity among the allies.

76. Development of states in Europe and its neighbourhood on principles of good governance and democracy is in Latvia's interests. Latvia will therefore continue supporting efforts of the states, which are on the way to the Euro-Atlantic integration.

3.3. Implementation of National Defence and Countering of External Threats

3.3.1. Strengthening National Defence Capabilities

77. In case of war, the NAF ensures national defence by employing all available means in accordance with the procedures stipulated in given laws and regulations. The national defence system must be capable to respond rapidly and within the framework of collective defence to ensure overcoming and prevention of the threat.

78. In a situation where state of peace or war cannot be easily distinguished, all national military defence instruments and resources must be available for swift transfer from carrying out routine tasks to implementing assignments in time of crisis and war.

79. The national defence system must be able to efficiently respond to any unexpected attack or an attack at short notice and must be able to resist aggression during the initial conflict stage. Presence of the allied forces contributes to the ability to resist aggression and host additional NATO and allied forces.

80. Efficiency of decision-making and response time of senior officials while preventing initial threats and responding to an unexpected external military attack is crucial to the maintenance of the statehood of Latvia. Senior officials are therefore provided with the necessary communication and other means. Moreover, the officials' knowledge of crisis management procedures must be continuously improved in order to achieve immediate adoption of required decisions.

81. At the same time, the Commander of the NAF is obliged to implement military defence measures in case of an external threat even if the senior leadership's decision-making is hindered.

82. Domestic insurgency and diversions led or organised from outside using asymmetric methods, special task forces and intelligence services are to be assumed as a covert and undeclared war. Decision to overcome such threats must be taken immediately and primarily target activities of the foreign special forces and intelligence services.

83. In case of an armed conflict or war, the Ministry of Defence and the NAF ensure national military defence while the national civil defence system provides support to the NAF. It is necessary to define the role of the Prison Administration within the national defence policy to strengthen the overall national defence.

3.3.2. NAF Tasks and Capabilities

84. To ensure fulfilment of the current tasks of the NAF and those that are stipulated in laws and regulations, the following military capabilities of the NAF must be developed:

- capability to rapidly respond, prevent and localize any potential threat as close as possible to area of its origin by efficient organisation and planning of units' peacetime structures, geographic location and tasks;
- secure and, if necessary, decentralised operation of the military command, communication and information technologies, as well as their continuous functioning under any circumstances, including under the conditions of intense electronic warfare;
- capability to vigorously and efficiently engage the adversary with high quality equipment and technologies; land component of the NAF shall be prioritized to guarantee the full scope of operational capability (combat, combat support and combat supplies) and defensive measures; special attention will be paid to ensuring efficient intelligence, air defence, antitank, tactical mobility and counter-mobility capabilities;
- capability to counteract an adversary conventionally and asymmetrically, including neutralising adversary's asymmetric warfare, special and airborne operations. While performing this task, the NAF ensures effective counteraction to the adversary's military initiative and operations, demoralises the adversary and causes maximum possible damage to its fighting capabilities;

- guaranteed availability, security and defence in any conditions of Host Nation Support infrastructure and access roads;
- right of the Minister of Defence to authorise destruction of infrastructure objects by the NAF in case of operational necessity;
- capability to deploy military reinforcement to ensure defence and border control, particularly targeting special operations and illegal transit of weapons across the state border in any case of a threat to the state;
- high level of military integration, interoperability and cooperation with the NATO force and combat structures to ensure joint operational activities;
- availability of strategic communication capabilities both ensuring that the society has access to information, which is crucial for the state defence, and defending the state's information space during peacetime and wartime.

85. Considering the tasks and military capability requirements, the core of the operational capabilities of the NAF is the land forces component, including the National Guard and Special Operations unit, early warning capabilities, air surveillance and air defence. Development of these units and capabilities is a priority while planning the NAF resources. The development of other capabilities is closely linked to the support to land operations and ensuring the Host Nation Support capabilities.
86. In case of a crisis, the chain of supply must be correspondent to the needs of the NAF in order to ensure decentralised operation of the units. The NAF creates reserves of the necessary materials and technical assets, munition and fuel in order to supply the units during the situation of crisis and war.

3.3.3. Collective Defence: Interaction and Involvement

87. The cornerstone of Latvia's national defence is the NATO collective defence system, which ensures that an attack against Latvia is considered an attack against the whole alliance. Within the framework of collective defence, Latvia expects support from the NATO and individual allies.
88. Latvia is responsible for providing the necessary Host Nation Support to allied forces during peacetime and war. Host Nation Support is ensured by the development of the necessary infrastructure and enhanced interoperability between the NAF and allied armed forces.
89. By contributing to the development of the infrastructure, by coordinating and ensuring the presence of the allied forces in Latvia, NATO supplements and improves the capabilities to host NATO and allied units in the territory of Latvia.
90. Clear rules of engagement for allied forces located in the territory of Latvia in case of an attack, a clear and tested command and control between national and allied forces, pre-planned, coordinated and authorised action of national and allied armed forces are the preconditions for successful hosting of the allied forces in the territory of Latvia.
91. Latvia must provide the necessary support for the deployment of the allied forces within the territory of the country in case of crisis, including the provision of necessary territory for stationing of forces and support of the national economy for incoming forces.

3.3.4. Contribution of Latvia to Collective Defence

92. Taking into account the changes to the strategic security environment, greater importance must be assigned to the unity, solidarity and preparedness of the allies for implementing their collective defence obligations by immediately responding to any type of threats.

93. In the case of an attack against a NATO Member State, Latvia provides the required support by participating in any combat operation using the resources that are available. The development of the NAF combat capabilities is aligned with NATO military capability development guidelines and requirements.

94. Latvia is interested in promoting NATO response capabilities and the interoperability of the allied forces. Since joining the alliance Latvia has been actively participating in the NATO Response Forces, which are the initial forces for solving crises and carrying out collective defence operations.

95. Latvia fosters the deployment capability of the NAF units in accordance with the joint NATO policy, including participation in the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force that corresponds to standards of high readiness of several days. The NAF must maintain readiness to participate in the full spectrum of NATO-led operations with one infantry battalion battle group for up to six months without rotation or with units not exceeding two infantry companies or equivalent size specialised units for up to six months with rotation. The Naval Forces flotilla of the NAF must ensure readiness to participate in mine-countermeasure operations of NATO's High Readiness Forces. Latvia plans regular engagement in the EU Battlegroups.

96. Fulfilment of Latvia's commitments and its engagement abroad depends on the level of the threat to the state, the potential in the particular threat situation and the capabilities and resources that remain for national defence, taking into account the presence of the allies.

97. Latvia participates in joint collective defence projects that provide defence instruments, which can be used collectively by all the countries.

98. Interoperability of the allied forces, which is developed by means of various international training courses and exercises, is a significant element of the collective defence system. Latvia actively participates in military exercises abroad.

99. Latvia delegates representatives to the NATO structures at all levels in order to strengthen the alliance and to represent Latvia's interests.

100. Latvia's contribution promotes the use of the common NATO funding for developing the deployable capabilities of the allies, enables implementation of NATO Crisis Response System and enables identification and prediction of the possible threats in a timely manner. For Latvia it is important to ensure development of the NATO infrastructure in its territory.

3.3.5. Resources Required for National Defence

101. State institutions must ensure that they have necessary resources that enable carrying out their assigned national defence and security functions during peacetime, under the conditions of threat to the state and during wartime.

3.3.5.1. Defence Budget

102. A precondition for the development of the national defence capabilities is provision of appropriate defence financing. The ability to invest in defence attests not only to Latvia's willingness to meet its international obligations, but also demonstrates the capability of the state to assume responsibility for national defence in accordance with the threat level.

103. Pursuant to the Law on Medium-Term Budget Framework for 2016, 2017, and 2018, the approved increase in the budget expenditure of the Ministry of Defence is equivalent to 1.4% of GDP in 2016 and to 1.7% of GDP in 2017. The approved increase of the defence expenditure of Latvia in 2018 will amount to 2% of GDP. Latvia has committed to maintain this level of financing during following years. In compliance with the NATO

definition these resources may be used for defence purposes only. Latvia has to maintain a balanced defence expenditure structure by allocating less than 50% to expenditure on personnel and administration, 30% to expenditure on maintenance and a minimum of 20% to the procurement of new equipment.

3.3.5.2. Personnel

104. In order to perform the defined national defence tasks, it is necessary to increase the number of NAF personnel by primarily focusing on enhancing the operational capabilities of the NAF. The basis of the NAF structure is combat units and the elements of combat support, combat supply and command and control required for their operation. During peacetime, the NAF maintains 17500 militarily trained personnel including 6500 professional soldiers, 8000 National Guards and 3000 reserve soldiers.

105. In order to enhance the operational capacity of the NAF, essential improvements to its recruiting capacity, introduction of more flexible selection criteria and adaptation of the training programs for professional soldiers are required taking into account the demographic and physical development trends in Latvia. It is particularly important to facilitate further development of the Youth Guard movement by promoting the popularity of the Youth Guard among young people, as well as by enhancing motivation and providing various options for further involvement of young people and a wider society in national defence, such as participation in military training courses, camps, by joining the National Guard and service in the NAF.

106. It is necessary to promote National Guard training by offering a flexible and attractive participation system. Employers' willingness to provide more flexible working hours to allow National Guard members to participate in national defence-related activities will ensure that National Guards receive comprehensive training.

107. By promoting the sustainability and capacity of the NAF structure, the motivation of highly qualified and experienced experts to remain within NAF will be enhanced. In this regard, the system of social guarantees for soldiers must be expanded and its links with personal career and professional growth criteria must be aligned with the level of knowledge, operational experience and qualifications required for military service. Analogous measures should also be implemented for the officials of the Ministry of Interior and Prison Administration with special service ranks in order to eliminate different motivation systems in defence and internal services, which could lead to the weakening of domestic security and unreasonable competition.

108. In order to promote the national defence, it is necessary to improve the mobilisation system by resolving questions of personnel mobilisation and the legal status of the personnel to be included in the NAF, as well as by ensuring access by the NAF to the resources of national economy in case of a threat to the state. It is important to ensure the maintenance of state control over the critical infrastructure, especially in the area of communication in a situation involving a threat to the state. The Ministry of Defence must have a priority role with regard to the use of mobilised resources in case of crisis and war.

3.3.5.3. Military Industry

109. Taking into account the geography of Latvia, Latvia needs to continue developing a competitive military industry which would minimise its dependence on deliveries of munitions and equipment from other countries in crisis situation, enabling it to meet the minimum requirements for national defence by itself. Thus, development of the domestic industry will contribute to the operational military needs required for the national defence.

110. It is necessary to use domestic scientific research capacity to develop NAF capabilities and to assume responsibility for any risks that may arise in connection with the research process and the introduction of new technologies and production methods.

4. Concluding provisions

111. The defence budget until 2018 will be planned in compliance with the accelerated budget increase approved by the Cabinet of Ministers and will thus be equivalent to 2% of GDP by 2018. The Ministry of Defence will implement the National Defence Concept within the framework of allocated state budgetary funds.

112. The NAF development plan and this Concept serve as the basis for development of mid-term planning documents, including the guidelines issued by the Minister of Defence for the development of the national defence system and planning of next year's budget.

113. The NAF development planning process must ensure the continuity of the implementation of this Concept. Within this process it is important to identify the core capabilities of the NAF for undertaking the key tasks of the national defence.

114. State institutions ensure implementation of the National Defence Concept in compliance with their competence and tasks set forth in laws and regulations.

115. On the basis of the Concept, the Minister of Defence issues guidelines to the NAF Commander on the key principles of state defence's operational planning.

116. Pursuant to the National Security Law, the Saeima [Parliament] approves the State Defence Concept at least once during its every convocation by 1st October of the second year of its term.

Minister of Defence R. Bergmanis