

Speech by the Ambassador of Hungary H.E. Enikő GYÓRI

**commemorating the anniversary of the revolution and freedom fight of Hungary of
1848-49**

Torrejón de Ardoz, 20th March 2018

Commander,

My Fellow Countrymen,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1848 is commemorated in many European countries as the “**Spring of Nations**”, a year when a revolutionary wave of struggles for freedom erupted throughout the continent. It was on **March 15th** of 1848, when the **revolution began in Hungary**, which in our case was not only a quest for liberty, but also a **fight for the independence** of the Hungarian nation.

As we recall that day **170 years ago**, we commemorate the **heritage of our ancestors, who fought for national identity and sovereignty**, values that are **many political actors in Europe tend to question** these days. Those who consider national feelings as potentially harmful factors, and meanwhile disagree with the approach that the **protection of our community should be our main priority**, fail to address adequately the challenges the Euro-Atlantic community faces.

The situation is clearly different in **Central Europe**, where national identities are still cherished, and our governments consider it a priority to ensure the security of our citizens. Hungary holds this year the **rotating Presidency of the Visegrad Group**, a cooperation that encompasses four Central European countries: Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. We **believe that the security situation of Europe has worsened during the past years**, due to mass irregular migration and the threat of terrorism attacks – which unfortunately hit Spain last August. The conflicts in our neighbourhood - from Ukraine to the southern flank of the Mediterranean - add to the sense that the **protection of Europe and its citizens should come first**.

The Visegrad countries wish to **contribute to the European integration** based on their own traditions and values, **including the field of the European defence policy**, an area of intergovernmental cooperation. We believe that in order to be able to **protect the EU at our borders and in our neighbourhood**, the further development of the Common Security and Defence Policy is needed, on the basis of an intergovernmental cooperation. We welcome the Council decision last December establishment of **Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)**. Hungary was one of the first countries to adopt a governmental decree to join PESCO as a founding member. Out of the initial launch projects, we are primarily interested in participating in projects in the field of military health, logistics and cyber security.

As far as the **NATO** is concerned, since our accession almost two decades ago in 1999, the Alliance has become the cornerstone of our security, and our commitment to NATO has significantly increased our **participation in missions beyond our borders. Our soldiers in Torrejón (whom I am proud to recognize here today) and in many other parts of the world** are serving the interest of Hungary, as well as the interests of the Euro-Atlantic community.

Our soldiers are present in NATO mission **from Kosovo to Afghanistan**, contributing to regional security, as well as in Iraq, where we fight together in a coalition of countries against **terrorist organizations such as Daesh** and we are also ready to participate in the joint efforts to counter **challenges coming from the East**. NATO's adaptation should reflect a balanced approach, taking into consideration the interests of all Allies: 28 for 28.

In terms of the Southern flank of NATO, the "**NATO Strategic Direction South Hub**" (in Naples) has recently been established to improve our regional situational awareness and understanding of the regional threats, challenges as well as opportunities of the South. **Hungary is proud to contribute with military personnel.**

We believe that **the upcoming NATO Summit this July** will contribute to the strengthening of the **bond between Europe and North America**, while focusing on the key areas of interest for the Alliance. These challenges include projecting stability, the **efficient protection of our borders**, the **fight against terrorism**, the efforts to **keep our neighbourhood safe and stable**, to step up our efforts **against cyber attacks and hybrid threats**. We also consider the Open Door policy and the **Western Balkans** as an issue to be included in the summit.

Given the current threats, we also support the strengthening of **NATO-EU relations**, while emphasizing the importance of avoiding duplication between them (as we need **more military capabilities**, not more bureaucracy). We also believe that we need to do more in order to strengthen our own capabilities, thus contributing to a stronger and more capable Alliance. Therefore, the Hungarian government decided to further **increase our defence expenditures to 2% share of the GDP by 2024**. Our military should be equipped with all the tools necessary for the armed forces of the 21 century, thus honouring the struggles and sacrifices of the past generations of soldiers, as well as ensuring the commitment to the protection of our citizens.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, **remembering the Hungarian revolution and war of independence 170 years**, let us bow our heads before all our ancestors, and encourage our soldiers, wherever they serve, to get inspired by their dedication and their **service to the country and the broader Euro-Atlantic community**.