



Prime  
Minister

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23 May 2024

Dear President,

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has shaken the security and defence architecture on our continent to the core. It has proven that mistaken were those who took peace for granted. The recent tragic events in the Middle East have further reminded us of how volatile our neighborhood is, while the crises in other parts of the world, such as in the Sahel or the Horn of Africa, are an evidence of the wider repercussions which will affect us all. Geopolitical rivalries are rife and the fundamental principles of international law are put into question by a worryingly rising numbers of revisionist actors around the world. More than ever before, it has become clear that the EU and its Member States need to do more and better on security and defence. Because the current fragmented landscape is simply not up to today's needs and requirements. We must stand ready and prepared.

It is true that considerable progress has been achieved over the past few years and that very useful initiatives have been undertaken or are under way. The time has come to act on them if we want to ensure their implementation and achieve their full potential. We believe that the Council should follow up swiftly and concretely on the Commission's most recent proposals (the European Defence Industry Strategy and the European Defence Industry Programme), and of course we eagerly await the Commission's upcoming report on the funding options for our ambitious projects in the area of security and defence.

The European Union needs a game changer, a bold initiative that will send a clear and strong message to our friends and foes, to our allies and competitors alike, that the EU is taking its defence seriously. It will do whatever it takes to address its weaknesses and vulnerabilities, and complement its significant soft power with significant hard power capabilities.

*H.E. Ms Ursula von der Leyen*  
*President of the European Commission*

Europe will be safe as long as the skies over it are safe. This is why the EU needs a new ‘flagship’ programme - a **European air defence shield** – a comprehensive air defence system to protect our common EU airspace against all the incoming threats – including aircraft, missiles, drones and others. The geopolitical and technological developments in Europe’s periphery and beyond, the wars on our continent and in the world, teach us lessons that we can no longer ignore. We must develop a highly capable air defence system which will act as a credible deterrent against all possible aggressors. Which will act as a shield for our citizens and military forces, in case deterrence fails – thereby protecting all Member States of the EU and all European citizens.

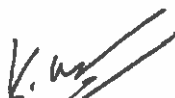
The European air defence shield must be a programme which addresses this major vulnerability in our security. A programme which strengthens the EU’s overall defence capabilities, and incentivizes European defence companies to develop cutting-edge technologies and become global leaders in their fields. It will also have a substantial multiplying effect by acting as a catalyst and facilitator for the further upgrading of the European defence and security industries, and for a considerably higher degree of cooperation and joint projects.

More than anything, developing and financing, at the European level, of a major unified European defence project, will send a clear signal that Europe is united and determined to act in self-defence, to protect itself, and that the EU is a global power whose economic strength is reinforced by military might. That it is a strong force to be reckoned with.

In this new geopolitical era, our economic and monetary union must be accompanied by a strong defence union. We must show leadership in preparedness and that requires means and tools. There is no time to lose.

We look forward to further discussing this proposed initiative with you, as well as with all the other leaders during the June European Council meeting.

Sincerely yours,



Kyriakos Mitsotakis

Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic



Donald Tusk

Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland