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**Intervenção da Ministra da Defesa Nacional, Helena Carreiras, por ocasião da abertura do IV Seminário de Defesa Nacional**

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It is a great satisfaction to open, today, the fourth edition of the National Defence Seminar. This yearly event serves the purpose of fostering the debate within the Portuguese defence community while helping to establish new bridges with society. Since it was first created in 2019, it has brought together the main actors in national defence policy with the aim of providing space for internal reflection. Since then, we have widened our approach to include both a restricted work session, that took place yesterday, and an open debate with the participation of the general public.

Our reasoning is clear: without steady linkages to knowledge production and public debate, it is not possible to make sound political decisions. It is vital that we keep promoting a productive dialogue between decision-makers, researchers and practitioners, to better develop national strategic thinking and better contribute to ongoing international debates. This Seminar is a direct and important contribution to such a goal.

To all the speakers and moderators, thank you for your presence and for the important contributions that I am sure you will provide us through the day.

I thank the National Defence Institute as well for helping to organize this event, in close collaboration with my Cabinet and the Secretary-General of the Ministry of National Defence. As usual, the proceedings of the Seminar will be published under one of the IDN's publication series, thus ensuring that the rich content of our discussions will endure beyond the event itself.

I would also like to thank the participants here at IDN and all those following us through livestreaming this morning. This is an important way to expand the public impact of the National Defence Seminar and contribute to bringing the Portuguese society closer to national defence, as we make these complex issues more understandable and within reach to a wider audience.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Over the years, the National Defence Seminar has brought together different perspectives and experiences on how to deal with common security and defence challenges. Previous editions have tackled a combination of internal priorities and global geopolitics, seeking to understand how new trends and developments could affect both national defence and international security. Today, we hold this fourth edition in a context that is marked by one defining international event and by one ongoing national process: the war in Ukraine, and the revision of the National Defence Strategic Concept.

Allow me to begin with a few words on the war itself, as it continues to reach new heights of violence and destruction, evidenced by the latest attacks on Kyiv and other parts of the Ukraine this week. As we witness the escalation on the ground, with no easy end in sight, we are reminded that our collective

security cannot be taken for granted. We are also reminded that acts of deliberate aggression and open disregard for a rules-based international order, such as those carried out by Russia on Ukraine, demand an appropriate response.

As it is well known, we have steadfastly delivered on that response since February 24<sup>th</sup> onwards. We have pledged continuous support to Ukraine, either by sending much-needed military equipment, by coordinating with our partners in the Ukraine Defence Contact Group, or by taking in over 57.000 refugees. We have joined the chorus of generalized condemnation of Russia's brutal aggression in every multilateral fora. We have followed through with joint efforts adopted within NATO and the European Union, to reinforce transatlantic cohesion and to increase our collective deterrence posture accordingly.

However, we also need to ensure that the overall reaction to such aggressions is holistic. First, our response needs not just be a reaction to the more immediate events and surroundings. It

should also take upon a more all-encompassing view of the impact that this conflict carries for our existence as part of a community of shared values and principles.

On Monday, the EU approved the launch of the new Assistance Mission to train Ukrainian military personnel on European soil, in which Portugal will actively participate. Yet, we will be sure to match this contribution with our ongoing obligations and expectations in other areas of national interest, such as in Africa, the Atlantic or the Mediterranean – a testament of our intent to truly adopt a 360 degrees approach to security in the present world order.

Second, our response to developments in Eastern Europe should not be restricted by the consequences of the war alone – a conflict that, while far-reaching in its global impact, does not exhaust the predicaments that the international community faces in other important domains.

We are aware of the scale of new threats that can emerge from fast-changing scenarios, such as those emanating from the cyber domain, from the geopolitical competition in space, from the need to protect critical infrastructures, or from the wide-ranging consequences of climate change. We must remain vigilant across the board and be ready to fully incorporate these issues and its different implications in our respective planning.

In other words, our overall response as a State needs to be strategic at its core, in terms of how to select goals, tools and outcomes for the next few years. That requires having the capability to identify what we lack, the willingness to go beyond short-term gains, and the vision to carve out the future that we aim to achieve.

It is for this reason that this year's edition of the National Defence Seminar takes place in the context of the ongoing revision of our own National Defence Strategic Concept. Since September, a Revision Committee has been working with the goal of submitting

a draft proposal by next January. In parallel, and as mentioned by Prof. Isabel Nunes, a cycle of thematic events coordinated by IDN has been taking place throughout the country, to collect contributions and input, which, hopefully, will also be included in the revision process.

Amidst these efforts, we wanted to reach out and explore similar experiences undertaken by our fellow Allies and Partners. That is why the different sessions over the course of this morning will focus on the processes underpinning other strategic orientations, ongoing or recently concluded.

All countries here represented have collectively worked towards the approval of key collective documents in recent months, such as the new NATO Strategic Concept, approved last June. All have also retained the need to express their security and defence interests in codified orientations of their own. As we consider pathways for future commitments, we believe there is great value in comparing how other attempts of this kind have been able to



incorporate surrounding dynamics, without losing focus of national priorities.

In sum, the context we live in requires major changes in our strategies and policies, in our investments and capabilities, and in our understanding of the new strategic environment. I am certain that the debates here today will help to ensure that our future strategies are well-crafted and, more importantly, that they can be soon followed by effective results.

Thank you once again for your presence. I wish you all a very productive and fruitful morning of work.