

Joint Declaration on the Strategic Partnership between the Republic of Bulgaria and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

1. Joint Declaration, signed by the representatives of the Republic of Bulgaria (hereinafter referred to as “Bulgaria”) and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (hereinafter referred to as the “United Kingdom”).

Introduction

2. Bulgaria and the United Kingdom are close allies that share democratic values, mutual interests and a common commitment to work together as friends and partners. Our bilateral relations are based on strong co-operation in foreign, security and defence policy, justice and home affairs, the economy and trade, technology, healthcare, science, energy security and diversification, environment and climate change, education, culture and cultural heritage, and our people-to-people links.
3. With this Joint Declaration, we set out our ambition to further enhance our close cooperation and bring a new dynamic to our bilateral engagement. We will explore ways of sharing best practices and experience, including by cooperating in multilateral fora such as the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Council of Europe.
4. Our cooperation is consistent with, and also benefits from, the EU – UK framework, and both sides see the positive development of that relationship as supportive of our bilateral efforts.

Foreign, Security and Defence Policy

5. Bulgaria and the United Kingdom affirm our close bilateral partnership on foreign, security and defence policy. As NATO allies we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area and to upholding the rules-based international order via effective multilateralism. We will continue to work together, sharing information, expertise and perspectives to enhance Europe’s resilience against security and hybrid threats.
6. We will work together to promote strengthened regional stability, security, democracy, rule of law, transborder cooperation and good neighbourly relations in South Eastern Europe, and the Black Sea region. In this regard we will continue to cooperate to support the Western Balkans region on its path of Euro-Atlantic integration and increase resiliency to internal and external challenges, including Russian malign influence.
7. We commit to building upon the Declaration for Enhancement of Bilateral Co-operation in the Field of Defence between the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Ministry of Defence of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland signed on 4 May 2018. We will explore opportunities to further develop shared defence collaboration through joint training and exercises to promote interoperability, enhancement of capabilities and skills. We will promote cooperation between our defence industries through mutual development and transfer of technologies and industrial capabilities. We will develop a mechanism for government-to-government agreements in defence procurements and to assist, where appropriate, with the further modernisation of our defence capabilities. We will ensure compliance with the applicable provisions of the European Union law in the fields of defence and security and any other laws, regulations or international obligations as appropriate.

8. In response to efforts by malign and hostile actors on our continent and around the world, we will enhance cooperation on cyber, resilience and preparedness, strategic communications management, counter-disinformation, emerging and disruptive technologies, and hybrid threats. We will work together to adapt to the threats posed by hybrid warfare, by collectively developing communications structures, processes and capability to improve our overall resilience to disinformation.
9. We stand resolute and united in support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and strongly support Ukraine in its fight against the aggression of the Russian Federation, including by the provision of appropriate aid and assistance. We will continue to work together with other Allies and international partners to support Ukraine, including in the area of post-war recovery and mitigating the consequences of war. We will also work to defend the rules and principles of international law, including the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence and holding perpetrators to account for international crimes.
10. We are committed to the respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as to the further promotion of democratic principles and values. We will work together to tackle joint issues of concern relating to discrimination.

Justice and Home Affairs

11. We are committed to strengthening our co-operation on tackling organised immigration crime. This includes breaking the illegal business model of people smugglers and human traffickers and strengthening returns processes. We will continue to prioritise our operational law enforcement cooperation, sharing expertise and information aimed at disrupting serious organised crime networks. We will continue to cooperate in areas that impact on Bulgaria and the United Kingdom's national security, including on threats such as drugs, firearms, illicit tobacco, and illicit finance.
12. We will work together to strengthen cooperation on law enforcement and criminal justice, to fully use the possibilities of cooperation in the framework of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of the other part (TCA). This could include strengthening law enforcement information exchange via existing mechanisms, such as INTERPOL, and exploring opportunities for developing new mechanisms to enable real-time reciprocal alert exchange and affording each other the widest measure of cooperation for the exchange of information extracted from criminal records, both for criminal and non-criminal purposes.
13. We will work to ensure full operational use of the surrender provisions in the TCA by having necessary domestic legislation in place. This includes the increase in circulation of TCA warrants between Bulgaria and the United Kingdom. We will continue to cooperate on justice and home affairs through our current bilateral and international arrangements and recognise the importance of a transparent and accountable judicial systems that bolsters trust in the Rule of Law.

Economic and Trade co-operation

14. We are committed to strengthening bilateral economic and trade co-operation, working closely to create an optimum environment for further bilateral trade and

investment. We will continue to build strong links and facilitate opportunities for Bulgarian and British business communities and address barriers to trade and investment.

15. We will seek to deepen the Bulgaria – UK relationship in research, innovation and technology and create an environment that promotes digitalisation and digital trade, mutual investment and closer links between researchers and businesses. We will look for opportunities to help entrepreneurs, start-ups, small and medium enterprises, as well as new and sustainable businesses to reach global markets and we will explore further the potential of Bulgaria as a major nearshoring destination for United Kingdom businesses.
16. The United Kingdom welcomes Bulgaria's ambition to join the OECD and we will continue to cooperate closely in multilateral fora to promote free and sustainable trade and drive reform of the system.

Technology, Scientific, Healthcare, Education, Cultural and Environment co-operation

17. We recognise the fundamental importance of research and innovation co-operation in underpinning our bilateral partnership. We will build on existing institutional co-operation in the areas of science, research and technology, and share best practices in the fields of science policy, research culture and emerging technology standards.
18. We will work to encourage strengthening co-operation between our educational institutions and increase academic mobility between the two countries. We will strive to strengthen further the friendly relations between our countries through encouraging the cooperation in the development of youth and sports on the principle of reciprocity, mutual understanding and benefit. We will work towards achieving mutual recognition of national documents, certifying completed levels of school and higher education, in compliance with the Bologna Process principles.
19. We are committed to close healthcare co-operation and encourage the sharing of best practices in areas including preventative medicine, digital healthcare, and medical research and innovation.
20. We are committed to meeting our shared climate change and environment ambitions by deepening our co-operation on decarbonisation through developing new sources of renewable and low carbon energy. We will develop our civil nuclear capacity in accordance with our two national strategies and priorities with sensitivity towards the social impact of such measures, including by sharing information and best practice. We will explore opportunities to cooperate on energy security, reducing energy dependence on the Russian Federation.
21. We recognise the valuable contribution of the Bulgarian and the British diaspora to our societies and are committed to further strengthening our close people-to-people links. We will work together to guarantee the protection of the rights of Bulgarian and British nationals under the Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, engaging with our respective diaspora, to achieve the necessary levels of coordination of our social security systems. We will work together to enhance parliamentary cooperation through respective Friendship Groups and committees, and in international parliamentary fora.

Governance

22. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria and the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of the United Kingdom will have responsibility for this Joint Declaration. An annual dialogue at a senior government official level will be held to evaluate the strategic direction and progress of our bilateral efforts. These will be further underpinned by regular consultations, coordination, exchanges of information, and cooperation at all levels of government.
23. This Joint Declaration is a political document and does not create any legally binding rights and obligations.
24. Bulgaria will pursue the goals of this Joint Declaration in full conformity with its obligations arising from European Union membership.

Signed in London on 24.10.2023 in two original copies, each in the Bulgarian and English languages, both texts being equally authentic.
