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Joint Declaration on Integrity in Defence Investment

We, the undersigned anti-corruption and integrity authorities, recognize that the current geopolitical context is leading to a substantial increase in defence expenditure and procurement across Europe and beyond.

While these investments address the need to strengthen national and collective security, they also require a renewed commitment to the highest standards of integrity, transparency and accountability.

Experience has consistently shown that periods of exceptional public investment, particularly where urgency and complexity are involved, may create heightened corruption risks if appropriate safeguards are not in place.

Past experiences have demonstrated that weaknesses in governance, oversight and control can reduce the effectiveness of public expenditure and ultimately compromise the very objectives of such investments: in this case, weakening defence.

In this context, we emphasize that the acceleration of defence investment should not come at the expense of transparency, integrity, accountability or effective oversight.

On the contrary, the current context reinforces the need to ensure that sound governance and robust preventive measures remain an integral part of decision-making processes, strengthening also public confidence.

We therefore underline the importance of embedding integrity safeguards throughout the entire defence investment cycle, including strategic planning, needs assessment, procurement, contract award and management, delivery, operation, maintenance, upgrades, disposal of equipment and all related financial and logistical processes.

Appropriate internal controls, risk management, conflict-of-interest prevention and/or management, and independent oversight should be proportionate to the risks involved and applied consistently at every stage.

We further encourage all public authorities and private actors involved in defence investment to strengthen preventive approaches, promote a culture of integrity and good governance, and ensure that corruption risks are systematically identified, assessed and mitigated.

Safeguarding integrity is not an obstacle to strengthening defence capabilities; it is an essential condition for achieving them. Ensuring that public funds are used efficiently,

effectively and in accordance with the highest standards of integrity protects public resources, strengthens public trust and ultimately enhances the effectiveness and credibility of defence itself.

Effective governance frameworks should, of course, ensure robust accountability and oversight, while also fully respecting the legitimate confidentiality requirements associated with classified information, defence capabilities and operational matters.

As anti-corruption and integrity authorities, and within the framework of our respective legal mandates, we reaffirm our commitment to supporting public and private institutions in promoting transparency, preventing corruption and fostering good governance in the implementation of defence-related investments.

We look forward to cooperate, exchange good practices and support national authorities in ensuring that increased defence investment is accompanied by equally strong commitments and specific actions to integrity, adjusted to each national context.