Foreword

The Ministry of Defence Development Plan 2021–2024 describes military defence development goals and the resources required to achieve those goals. The development plan is based on the National Defence Development Plan 2017–2026, the advice of the Commander of the Defence Forces, and NATO force capability objectives.

The four-year development plan by the Ministry of Defence ensures that the goals set in the National Development Plan for Defence 2017-2026 will be achieved within the planned timeframe. The focus of national defence investments remains actually manned and assembled combat capable units, which are ready, on the basis of a reliable warning, to react in as short a time as possible to a threat together with our allies. The new development plan completes the developments that were begun in the previous development plan (2020–2023) and adds new developments.

The main developments for the period are the following:

- exchanging of weaponry – new handguns, machine guns, anti-tank missile systems, anti-tank grenade launchers and sniper rifles;

- self-propelled artillery will be deployed;

- in addition to several already fully equipped units, combat service support battalions, combat engineering battalions, the Logistics Battalion, a military police company, and six additional territorial defence companies will all be fully equipped under this development plan;

- means of transport, including for the territorial defence structure, will be acquired;

- as a new branch, the Cyber Command will be equipped in full;

- the central command capability of the Defence Forces will undergo significant development, situational awareness will improve, including NATO-compliant maritime surveillance, and a tactical communications system will be developed, one that is capable of interoperability with our allies;

- protection at the individual level will improve (flak jackets, body armour, night vision equipment, and decontamination equipment);

- the acquisition of laser simulator training devices, which permit units at the company level to realistically and efficiently train together under limited training conditions;

- completion of the development of the 1st Infantry Brigade's modular field hospital solution, ensuring medical support up to the battalion level.

Attention will continue to be focused on ensuring the availability of sufficient ammunition supplies. During the period 2021-2024 an additional investment of EUR 120 million will invested in ammunition, to which the annual EUR 20 million contribution from the National Defence Investment Programme will be added. In addition, the United States is providing significant support to the stockpiling of wartime ammunition.

To promote the development of the intelligence and early warning fields, investments will be made, within the framework of this development plan, in the various capabilities of Military Intelligence and the Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service.

Several new buildings and structures were completed in 2019 in the field of infrastructure. The most important projects were the Joint Operations Centre, in Tallinn, the renovated headquarters, new barracks in Jõhvi, and a new rear building at Tapa. With joint financing from NATO, an expansion of the medical complex, equipment maintenance hall and universal halls, as well as campgrounds, container and equipment sites took place at Tapa. With NATO joint financing, a total of 45 km of roads with different intended uses were also built in 2019. In addition, various structures were completed, which the UK will refinance upon completion, such as the loading yard in Lintsi or the brake testing ramp and the winch testing area at the Tapa campus.

The following are larger scale infrastructure projects being performed within the framework of the new development plan:

- Construction of vocational training infrastructure in Tartu for the Estonian Military Academy;

- The new infrastructure being built in the Mine Harbour, to provide headquarters, training, medical, diving, storage and technical repairs;

- development of the 2nd Infantry Brigade’s infrastructure (including, for example, vehicle garages and shelters in Tartu and Luunja, and supply warehouses in Tartu);

- expansion of the Jõhvi campus;

- Creation of additional possibilities at the Paldiski campus for storing and repairing equipment.

People are at the heart of the development of military capabilities. Last year, the number of active servicemen in the Defence Forces grew by 85 to a total of 3508. In 2019 the average salary for active servicemen was 30% higher than the Estonian average – this wage level is also guaranteed for the period 2021–2024, in order to meet the recruitment goals related to the development of military capabilities.

In the case of the Defence League, annual operational support will increase, exceeding EUR 45.5 million by 2024. In addition, the supplying of territorial defence units, formed on the basis of the Defence League, will continue in a manner equivalent to that of units in the Defence Force performing similar tasks. This time, the development plan once again envisages the creation of additional positions within the Defence League.

In addition to the development of military defence, the Development Plan sets aside funding for the promotion of research and development, as well as support for Estonia's defence industry sector, the total annual volume of which is EUR 800,000. The patriotic education programme will continue, along with support for national defence education taking place in schools. The number of individuals entering conscript service will grow to 3800 and alternative service will be ensured for an average of 63 people each year. In order to ensure that the number of conscripts increases to 4000, as stipulated in the National Defence Development Plan, the Women in the Defence Forces programme and events promoting defence awareness will continue. Individuals dropping out of conscript service is also of importance alongside individuals being called up for conscript service. As a result of the continued improvement in training, the dropout rate from conscript service for conscripts fell to a record low level in 2019.

International cooperation remained very active and widespread in 2019. In December 2019, NATO Heads of State and Government met in London, where the renewal of NATO’s defence plans for the Baltic Republics and Poland were approved. Work has continued between Estonia, Latvia and Denmark in starting up Headquarters Multinational Division North. Coordination of participation in bilateral and multilateral cooperation projects and joint financing projects continued, particularly in the direction of Ukraine, Georgia and Afghanistan.

The presence of allies in Estonia has been ensured through a number of different cooperation initiatives. Since the spring of 2017, Tapa has hosted NATO Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP), the core member of which is United Kingdom, with France and Denmark being the other participating countries on a rotating basis. NATO’s Baltic Air Policing (BAP) mission will continue from Ämari Air Base, operating on the 365/24/7 principle. The NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) helps support the reception of NATO units, provides them with support, and helps to carry out exercises on Estonian territory. In the spring of 2019, 15 NATO Member States and NATO Allies joined Estonia in Kevadtorm (Spring Storm), the largest military training exercise held in Estonia.

As at the end of 2019, Estonia was participating in international military operations with NATO, EU, UN, and US-French joint coalition operations in Africa, the Middle East, Iraq, Afghanistan and the Mediterranean, with a total of 110 servicemen. A total of 126 members of the Defence Forces were ready to act in readiness units (NATO Response Forces (NRF), the United Kingdom-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) and initial deployment in possible operations of the UN, NATO, the EU or its Member States).

The four-year development plan of the Ministry of Defence serves to ensure that the Defence Forces are more combat ready, that we are taking a significant step closer to achieving the goals set forth in the National Defence Development Plan 2017-2026, and that the most intensive collective defence and military co-operation in history continues.