

## **Statement by the Minister of Defence of the State of Israel Mr. Benjamin Gantz**

- Thank You, Minister Petrides, and Minister Panagiotopoulos for this warm welcome, the first visit of an Israeli defense minister since 2018.
- Today marks another important milestone in the trilateral partnership between Israel, Cyprus and Greece, as we enter into meaningful dialogue to discuss issues of mutual concern to our countries.
- Our partnership is based on a shared commitment to promoting stability, collaboration and peace across the Mediterranean, as well as on the warm ties between our peoples- all of whom descend from ancient civilizations and carry a legacy of democracy and progress.
- At this historic moment of international reconciliation, where we see bridges being built instead of walls, Israel is as committed as ever to supporting nations who favor peace over conflict and exchange over aggression. Unfortunately, not all states have chosen this path, and peace-loving nations must remain united and prepared to jointly confront threats posed by radical regimes and terror organizations who choose aggression and violence.
- And while Israel will always prefer dialogue over military force, and extend its hand to anyone who desires to join the path of peace, we cannot ignore threats jeopardizing our citizens. Even now, our forces are on heightened security alert across our borders. But our enemies know very well how strong we are and that they will bear the consequences of any violation of sovereignty on our territory.
- Today, we were able to reach important understandings that will help all three nations contend with our mutual challenges and threats and advance our common interests.
- We have agreed to advance our mil2mil partnership, solidified our work plan for collaboration in 2021, which will include our fourth annual trilateral summit, this time in Israel. We've also promoted large scale industry cooperation that will bolster our defense abilities and create thousands of jobs for all three economies.
- We have managed to meet this year in spite of the coronavirus pandemic, which shows both the importance that we attach to this partnership, and also demonstrates

the centrality of international cooperation to our ability to deal with hardships together and emerge stronger. In fact, this is one thing we have learned from the pandemic: The only way out is together.

- I am personally committed to promoting our defense and state ties even further. I believe that our advanced technologies, fast testing, and good relations can help us quickly restart the regular thriving tourism and economic cooperation between our countries. I intend to allocate the resources needed to put our collaboration back on track.

- Above all I will continue joining forces with my partners standing here next me today, and other partners near and far, as we work together to encourage stability and prosperity, for our peoples, this region, and the world at large.