REPUBLIC OF KOSOVA
MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

# NEWSLETTER

May 2023

## "DEFENDER EUROPE '23" HIGHLIGHTS IMPROVING KSF CAPABILITIES

The opening ceremony of the largest international military exercise in the Balkan region, "Defender Europe '23", where the KSF demonstrated its combat capabilities, as well as the scale of military interaction, took place on May 21st, in the "Skënderbeu" square in Prishtina.

This ceremony was attended by the highest state dignitaries, including the President of the Republic of Kosovo, Vjosa Osmani, Prime Minister Albin Kurti, Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj, Commander of the KSF, Lieutenant General Bashkim Jashari, Deputy Ministers of Defense, Shemsi Syla and Adnan Rexheplar, Deputy Commander of the KSF, Major General Enver Cikaqi, US Ambassador to Kosovo, Jeff Hovenier, US Brigadier General, Derek Adams, Minister of Internal Affairs, Xelal Sveçla, Mayor of Prishtina, Përparim Rama, Generals of the KSF, deputies of the Assembly of Kosovo, as well as ambassadors, military attachés, and senior officers of partner countries.

Guests were addressed by President Osmani, who, among other things, emphasized that the main objective of this exercise is the display of military power, to ensure peace, and that this exercise is a reminder that strength does not lie only in weapons , but also our ties and common alliance.

"Defender Europe '23" have been underway for a year and a half and included investment in the purchase of equipment and weapon systems, and intense training.

"For us, it is very important to always increase our capacities according to NATO standards, because our journey is clear, our destination is, membership in NATO. Therefore, we will fulfill every duty and obligation to be part of this big family", said Minister Mehaj.

Meanwhile, the US ambassador in Kosovo, Jeffrey Hovenier, in his speech, emphasized that this event is a great achievement of Kosovo and represents the strengthening of relations between the USA and Kosovo and that this exercise is the most ambitious effort that the KSF has undertaken thus far.

The international military exercise "Defender Europe '23" was held from May 21 to June 2, where 25 countries with over 22 thousand soldiers would participate. The Republic of Kosovo as a host country contributed over 1300 soldiers.

Prime Minister Kurti, in his speech,, said that "Defender Europe 2023" is the biggest military event that has ever happened in Kosovo and that the KSF ranks fourth among the 25 participating armies in this exercise. In terms of the number of personnel engaged.

Furthermore, Prime Minister Kurti emphasized that this is evidence of the will to build defense capacities and unwavering commitment to be part of the common defense system of countries that embrace and represent democratic values.

Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj, emphasized that preparations for the successful realization of

**THE MINISTER OF ARMED FORCES OF GREAT BRITAIN JAMES HEAPPEY WAS RECEIVED WITH HIGH MILITARY HONORS AT MINISTRY OF DEFENSE**

The Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj, accompanied by the deputy commander of the KSF, Major General Enver Cikaqi, in May hosted the Minister of the Armed Forces of Great Britain, James Heappey, accompanied by the British Ambassador Nicholas Abbott.

Initially, Minister Mehaj welcomed Minister Heappey and thanked him for his visit to the Ministry of Defense and informed him about the progress of the KSF in the implementation of the Comprehensive Transition Plan and emphasized the commitment to close cooperation with partner states, with purpose of raising the professional, operational capacities and all the necessary infrastructure for the development of the army of our state.

Minister Mehaj expressed his gratitude to Great Britain, in particular the Ministry of Defense for the support given to our country on the way to membership in the United Nations, NATO and other international organizations. The meeting discussed the successful realization of the joint-deployment of the KSF alongside the British forces in the Falkland Islands, which was aimed at increasing the operational and interaction capacities with the forces of the partner countries to serve in potential future peacekeeping missions. They also discussed the possibility of future co-deployments for the KSF with alongside British forces. For his part, the Minister of the Armed Forces of Great Britain, James Heappey, expressed his satisfaction with the advancement of the Ministry of Defense and the Kosovo Security Force and emphasized that Great Britain will continue to strongly support Kosovo in realizing its aspirations in the involvement in the Euro-Atlantic organizations.

Minister Heappey was also received by the Commander of the KSF, Lieutenant General Bashkim Jashari, where they discussed the cooperation between the Armed Forces of the UK and the KSF. General Jashari informed and thanked Minister Heappey for the close cooperation and the role played by the contribution of the United Kingdom in the development of the Kosovo Security Force.

**THE COOPERATION BETWEEN KOSOVO AND ITALY IN FUNCTION OF KEEPING PEACE AND PERMANENT STABILITY**

The Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj, paid an official visit to Italy in May, where he was received with military honors by the Minister of Defense of the Republic of Italy, Guido Crosetto. Also, on this visit were the Deputy Commander of the KSF, Major General Enver Cikaqi, the Ambassador of Kosovo in Italy, Lendita Haxhitasimi and senior officials of the Ministry of Defense. Minister Mehaj and his Italian counterpart discussed cooperation in the field of defense, education and training of KSF soldiers in specialized fields, Special Forces, aviation and medicine. Among other things, they also discussed the current geopolitical situation, the war in Ukraine, and the importance of unity for the support of Ukrainians in the fight against the Russian aggressor. In this aspect, Minister Mehaj made it known that Kosovo takes a clear position against Russian policies and regularly participates in the Contact Group for the Support of Ukraine. He emphasized that Kosovo is offering everything that is possible, within our capacities, including the hosting of refugees as well as the integration of Ukrainian journalists in Kosovo and also the provision of training with specialist instructors of the International Search and Rescue Center.

• As part of this official visit, Minister Mehaj met the Commander-in-Chief of the Carabinieri "Arma del Carabinieri", Lieutenant General Teo Luz. The Deputy Commander of the KSF, Major General Enver Cikaqi, the Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo in Italy, Lendita Haxhitasimi and the Commander of the KDS, Brigadier General, Jeton Dreshaj, were also present at the meeting. Cooperation in the field of the Military Police, capacity building through the training of soldiers in the Train-the-trainer modules, the field of investigations and the exchange of experiences, were the topics on which special emphasis was placed during this meeting.

Also, during the visit to Italy, Minister Mehaj met the President of the Center for Higher Defense Studies in Italy, Admiral Giacinto Ottaviani. In this meeting, they discussed the forms of cooperation, so that our soldiers continue their education in some of the directions that this Center offers, including leadership, geopolitics, cyber security and legal studies. Minister Mehaj emphasized on this occasion that the continuous education of the military is an important element of the development of our army.

At the end of the official visit to Italy, Minister Mehaj, together with the delegation, visited the Embassy of the Republic of Kosovo, where he was received by the ambassador, Lendita Haxhitasimi, whom he thanked for her diplomatic commitment in the service of the nation's interests, maintaining peace and general security.

## COOPERATION BETWEEN KOSOVO AND BANGLADESH DEEPENS

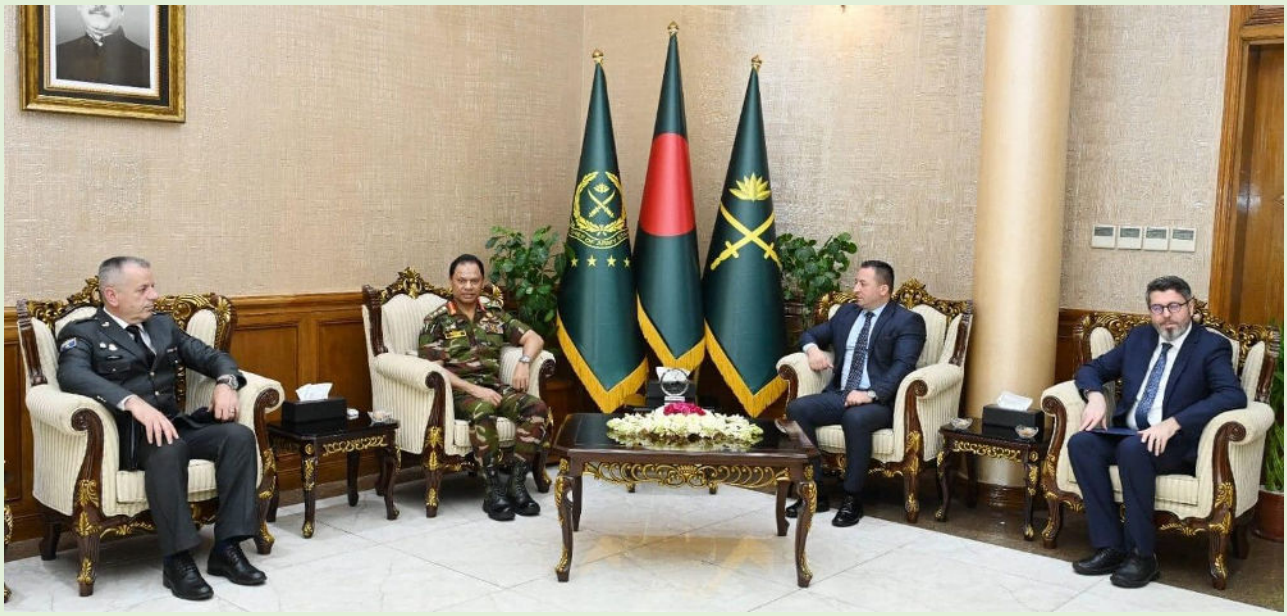
The Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj, accompanied by the director of the Directorate of Intelligence in the MoD, Major General Gëzim Hazrolli, in May also paid an official visit to Bangladesh, where he was first received by Lieutenant General Waker-uz-Zaman and the Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh for maritime affairs, Rear Admiral Md. Khurshed Alam. Afterwards, Minister Mehaj's visit continued to the house museum of the father of the nation of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Following his visit to Bangladesh, the Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj, held an official meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, A.K Abdul Momen. In this meeting, Minister Mehaj with special emphasis asked Minister Momen for support in the process of new recognitions from Bangladesh's partner countries, which have not yet recognized our country. Also, Minister Mehaj together with Minister Momen discussed the cooperation that will be in the field of defense, economic and cultural cooperation as well as the process of the agreement to avoid double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion. At the end of the meeting, Minister Mehaj expressed his gratitude for the warm welcome and willingness to support the Republic of Kosovo, stressing that by sharing common values of democracy, peace and freedom, our cooperation with the state of Bangladesh will be the right level.

In the framework of this visit, Minister Mehaj, accompanied by the director of the Directorate of Intelligence in the MoD, Major General Gëzim Hazrolli, were received in a meeting by the chief officer of the Chief of Staff of the Bangladesh Army, Lieutenant General Waker-uz-Zaman, where the focus of the discussions were joint training, military engineering, peacekeeping missions, as well as increasing the number of women in the military.

In this meeting, it was emphasized that the exchange of experiences in these fields is significant for both parties.

They also discussed the realization of joint exercises which are also supported by the United States of America, such as the emergency management exercise in which they agreed to participate.



Following this official visit, Minister Mehaj and General Hazrolli met the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Bangladesh, General Sheikh Mohammad Shafiuddin Ahmed. During the meeting, it was agreed to deepen the cooperation between our countries in terms of defense and other areas of interest to both parties, as equal partners. From his side, General Ahmed expressed his readiness for further cooperation and coordination regarding training for Special Forces, anti-terror training and training for monitoring and border surveillance.

At the end of the official visit to Bangladesh, Minister Mehaj, accompanied by his delegation, visited the Embassy of the Republic of Kosovo in this country. On this occasion, Minister Mehaj thanked the ambassador, Güner Ureya, the diplomat Visar Kluna and the whole team for their excellent work and commitment in the realization of the meetings between Bangladesh and the Republic of Kosovo.

**MINISTER MEHAJ VISITED THE FAIR HELD WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE "ASDA 2023" CONFERENCE**

At the "ASDA 2023" fair and conference, which was carried out under the official support of the Government of Croatia, the Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj, accompanied by the delegation of the Ministry of Defense, visited the stands of some of the 200 companies from the 30 participating countries that deal with the production of military tools and equipment, the incorporation of which equipment would modernize the Kosovo Security Force, raising its overall operational capacities.

On the sidelines of ASDA, Minister Mehaj also met the Ambassador of Canada, Alan Bowman, the Ambassador of Denmark, Ole Henrik Frijs Madsen, the Ambassador of Norway, Haakon Blankenborg, as well as the Ambassador of Japan, Iso Masato, with whom they discussed further cooperation in the field of defense and security.

## FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT ON DEFENSE COOPERATION BETWEEN KOSOVO AND CROATIA IS SIGNED

On the occasion of participating in the ASDA (Adriatic Sea Defense & Aerospace) exhibition and conference, the Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj, met his Croatian counterpart, Mario Banožić, where they signed a Framework Agreement for Cooperation in the Defense Field.

In this meeting, the two ministers discussed many issues relevant to the current geopolitical situation, including Russian influence in the Balkans, the necessity of unity in the face of the tendency to destabilize and undermine democratic values, joint investment in strategic areas in terms of security and defense, in order to guarantee peace and stability in the region and beyond. Among other things, Minister Banozic guaranteed unsparing support from Croatia for Kosovo and our European future.

Within the framework of the official visit to Croatia, the Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj, held a courtesy meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Croatia, Gordan Grlić-Radman. In this meeting, the two ministers discussed the current geopolitical situation and the latest developments regarding the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, where, among other things, Minister Mehaj once again emphasized his position on the integration of each community and the extension of law and order throughout the territory of Republic of Kosovo, based on the modern model of Croatia, built on the democratic values and standards of the European Union. In this way, Minister Mehaj said that all-round stability and detachment from isolationist ideas that bring failure will be possible.

## THE KSF CONTINGENT, CO-DEPLOYED WITH THE BRITISH ARMY IN THE FALKLAND ISLANDS, HAS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THE CO-DEPLOYMENT AND RETURNED TO KOSOVO

The participation of the KSF in a co-deployment with British forces alowed KSF members to increase the skills and capacities, while raising the level of trust security partners and preparing Kosovo's prepares the military for more complex future missions. These co-deployments improve interoperability, as well as increases the operational level of our military to better prepare the KSF to serve in the future in multilateral peace missions wherever required.

The KSF contingents, in the "Atlantic" mission, were fully integrated with theBritish units, and jointly carried out all phases of training and tactical and operational aspects of the mission.

## DEFENSE STRATEGY APPROVED

At the 143rd meeting of the Government, the Defense Strategy document was approved, in which the main objectives are defined based on state interests such as: Protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, modernization and advancement of military capacities, enhancement of bilateral cooperation, membership in organizations and participation in international operations, as well as the advancement of cooperation with NATO and its mechanisms in the Republic of Kosovo, objectives which are intended to be fulfilled in the medium and long-term plan of the Ministry of Defense.

## MINISTER MEHAJ HOSTED US SENATOR GARY PETERS

The Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj, together with the director of the Directorate of Intelligence in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Major General Gëzim Hazrolli, hosted the American Senator Gary Peters, accompanied by the American Ambassador Jeffrey Hovenier.

In this meeting, they discussed the current geopolitical situation, the war in Ukraine, the contribution offered by Kosovo as part of the Contact Group for the Defense of Ukraine, where also, during the meeting, Minister Mehaj emphasized the fact of the support that Russia has from Serbia in the Balkans, as the only country that has consistently supported pro-Russian policies and refuses to impose sanctions on this aggressor. Senator Peters expressed his high appreciation for the advancements that Kosovo has made not only in the field of security and defense, but also in the good governance of the country in many directions, proving its stance in favor of Western values and in favor of NATO, the alliance it fully supports maintaining peace and independence of states.

## MINISTER MEHAJ ATTENDED THE ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE CONTACT GROUP FOR UKRAINE

The Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj, together with the Chief of Staff of the KSF, Brigadier General Ilir Qeriqi and the military adviser, Colonel Ejup Maqedonci, participated in the eleventh meeting of the Contact Group for Ukraine, called by the Secretary of Defense of USA, Mr. Lloyd J. Austin III.

On this occasion, Minister Mehaj emphasized that the participation of the Republic of Kosovo within the Contact Group proves the strong trust of our strategic partner, the USA, in the Ministry of Defense and the KSF and is an expression of high appreciation for the concrete readiness of Kosovo to provide all possible support and protection of Ukraine.

## MINISTER MEHAJ IN A VIRTUAL MEETING WITH THE GENERAL COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE, INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND SECURITY OF THE STATES OF SOUTH-EAST EUROPE IN THE COOPERATION PROCESS

Minister Mehaj participated in a virtual meeting with the General Commission for Justice, Internal Affairs and Security of the countries of South-Eastern Europe in the Cooperation Process between these countries. In this meeting, several important topics were discussed, driven by the current geopolitical situation, the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has directly affected the strategies of states and forms of cooperation, the necessity of unity as the only form of defense of democratic values in the face of autocratic states with expansionist tendencies. Minister Mehaj emphasized that being a witness to the continuous Russian attacks in Ukraine and the Russian hybrid war targeting the Balkans, the expansion of NATO is the antidote to ensure stability, that together with strategic investments in the field of defense and all-round economic development, will enable the resolution of the refugee crisis and the maintenance of peace between nations.

## MINISTER MEHAJ HOSTED FOR A MEETING THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF GREAT BRITAIN FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS

The Minister of Defence, Armend Mehaj, received in a meeting the special representative of Great Britain for the Western Balkans, Stuart Peach, accompanied by the ambassador of Great Britain to the Republic of Kosovo, Nicholas Abbott, with whom they discussed security challenges in the country, the region and beyond.

During the meeting, the minister emphasized the fact that Russia through Serbia is expanding its influence in the Balkans, and the current events in the north of the country are precisely the work of criminal groups instigated and financed by these two countries, which aims to destabilize the country. On the other hand, Mr. Peach highly appreciated the cooperation so far between the two countries, in particular the cooperation in the field of defense and expressed his concern for the escalation of the security situation in the northern municipalities of Kosovo. At the end of the meeting, they agreed that returning the situation to normality and reducing tensions is the best way to move forward.

## THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE PUBLISHED A VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT FOR RECRUITMENT OF CADETS FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2023/2024

In May, the Ministry of Defense published a vacancy announcement for recruitment of cadets for the academic year 2023/2024 for studies in the military academies of the Republic of Albania, the Republic of Croatia, and North Macedonia. The recruitment vacancy for cadets has remained open from May 2 to May 15, 2023. The Ministry of Defense serves all citizens of Kosovo and welcomes applications from women and men for KSF cadets, regardless of their ethnicity!

## THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE AMERICAN NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU, LIEUTENANT GENERAL MARC H. SASSEVILLE HAS VISITED THE KSF

The Commander of the Kosovo Security Force, Lt. General Bashkim Jashari, has received in an official meeting Deputy US National Guard Bureau Chief , Lt. Gen. Marc H. Sasseville.

Initially, General Jashari welcomed General Sasseville, thanking him for the unreserved support provided by the National Guard Bureau and in particular the Iowa National Guard and informed him of the achievements of the KSF, the development plan and transition.

At the end of the meeting, the American general stressed that the National Guard Bureau and the USA will continue to be the loyal ally of the KSF, in further professional development on the way to integration into NATO and other Euro-Atlantic structures.

## MAJOR GENERAL IRFETE SPAHIU HAS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THE INSPECTOR GENERAL COURSE AT FORT BELVOIR - VIRGINIA, USA

In the framework of bilateral cooperation with the USA and at the invitation of the US ARMY INSPECTOR GENERAL SCHOOL, Major General Irfete Spahiu has successfully completed the Inspector General course at Fort Belvoir - Virginia, USA.

## KSF OFFICERS GRADUATE FROM COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLLEGE (CGSC), UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The officers of the Kosovo Security Force, Majors Liridon Poroshtica, Vjose Maloku-Ramadani, Fatbardha Osaj-Fazliu and Vedat Shaqiri, after intensive one-year studies, graduated with high success from the Command and General Staff College (CGSC), in the Army of the United States of America.

It is the first time that two officers from Kosovo participated, and they were also the first international officers participating in this training. This course aims to prepare competent and flexible officers, ready to lead whenever they are required and is dedicated to officers of the rank of Major, who serve in leadership duties and officers of headquarters and commands.

## THE MILITARY POLICE OF THE KSF ARE TRAINED BY THE CARABINIERI

Within the framework of the cooperation that the KSF has with Italy, a team of the Military Police, the Investigation Sector of the Kosovo Security Force stayed at the headquarters of the Carabinieri in Rome, Italy, where they conducted training in crime investigation methods, that the carabinieri use in the field of investigation, this training and trainings in this field create the opportunity to increase the capacities of this important sector for the KSF Military Police.

## ITALIAN INSTRUCTORS SUPPORT INCREASE OF SEARCH& RESCUE CAPACITIES FOR KSF

In the framework of the cooperation that the KSF has with the Italian army and with the aim of raising and advancing the operational capacities in the field of Alpine Search and Rescue, Italian instructors carried out theoretical and practical training in order to prepare as well as possible the members of the National Guard of the KSF, to be as prepared as possible to act efficiently where required in military support to civil authorities. The Commander of the National Guard of the KSF, Brigadier General Naim Haziri thanked Colonel Gironi and the Italian instructors for the help provided and at the same time wished success to the trainees, and emphasized that this training will be continued at even more advanced levels to specialize the field of Search&Rescue, including the mountaineering part.

## KSF OFFICERS COMPLETE "STAFF OFFICER BASIC COURSE" IN ALBANIA

In the presence of the senior leaders of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Albania and the Attaché of the Republic of Kosovo accredited in Albania, Colonel Enver Hoti, the ceremony of the completion of the "Basic Course for Staff Officer" was held in Albania, which was part of and five captains of the Kosovo Security Force. Participation in such education and trainings helps to raise the professional level of members of the Kosovo Security Force, so that they are as prepared as possible to face different situations both inside and outside the country.

## KSF SOLDIERS WERE TRAINED BY TURKISH TEAMS FOR "INFANTARY TASKS AND TACTICS

In the framework of cooperation with the Turkish contingent, a mobile team carried out theoretical and practical training on "Infantry Duties and Tactics" for members of the Third Regiment of the Ground Forces and the National Guard of the Kosovo Security Force. The training aimed to prepare soldiers in infantry tactics, focusing on: Movement and camouflage, movements based on signs, movement under enemy fire, defensive attacks in urban areas, tactical use of armored vehicles in urban areas , EOD, night operations etc.

## AT TRADOC WAS HELD THE HANDOVER-TAKEOVER CEREMONY OF THE GERMAN DONATION WORTH 405 THOUSAND EUROS

This ceremony was attended by the Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj, accompanied by the General Inspector of the KSF, Major General Irfete Spahiu, the Commander of the TRADOC, Brigadier General Jeton Dreshaj, as well as officials and officers of the MoD and the KSF. These vehicles facilitate the development of practical lessons for the military who are in the process of licensing for category C. On this occasion, Minister Mehaj thanked the deputy ambassador of Germany in the Republic of Kosovo, Matthias Conrad, who delivered the donation, for the continued support that the German state offers to the Kosovo Security Force and our country. From his side, deputy the German ambassador, Mr. Conrad, emphasized that the cooperation of the German state continues to be close with our country, at many international levels, especially in the field of defense and security.

## DURING MAY, MINISTER MEHAJ HOSTED THE AMBASSADOR OF ALBANIA AND THE AMBASSADOR OF TURKEY IN KOSOVO

Following the meetings with the representatives of the diplomatic corps in Kosovo, the Minister of Defense, Armend Mehaj, hosted the ambassador of the Republic of Albania, Qemal Minxhozi, and the ambassador of the Republic of Turkey in Kosovo, Sabri Tunç Angili. In the meeting with Minister Mehaj and Ambassador Minxhozi, they talked about the next high level meeting planned between the governments of both countries. In this meeting, it was emphasized to identify areas in which procedures should be facilitated and barriers eliminated. On this occasion, Minister Mehaj expressed his gratitude and high appreciation for the hospitality on the part of the Republic of Turkey on the occasion of his visit, for close cooperation between both countries as well as for the help and support offered in construction, development and advancement of the military operational skills and capacities of the KSF.