



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA  
DEFENCE FORCES

General Vincent Giraud  
Chief of Military Staff  
Private Office of the President  
France

11.06.2026 No 3.5-1/26/ 355

Dear General Giraud,

Hereby I am forwarding you the invitation to participate as a speaker at the 20th Annual Baltic Conference on Defence (ABCD) held on 22-23 September 2026 in Tallinn, Estonia.

The theme of the conference is "Choosing to Win: Building Confidence in Complexity". ABCD is a regional defence and security conference. For the second time, ABCD will take place as part of the Estonian Defence Week linking a series of events showcasing Estonia's defence sector and bringing together security experts to discuss regional, European and global foreign and security policy issues.

I would also like to emphasise the strategic importance of events such as the ABCD in the Baltic region, situated on NATO's eastern flank. As the war in Ukraine continues to affect Europe and Russia actively challenges the unity and determination of the democratic world, maintaining close cooperation and candid discussions among allies has never been more important.

By coming together, sharing experiences, and addressing common challenges, we send a clear message to our adversaries, reassure our allies, and strengthen the confidence of our people. Our collective commitment to protecting freedom, preserving democratic values, and ensuring lasting security remains unwavering.

It would be a great honour for us if you could find time in your busy schedule and speak at the conference and moreover, we would have an opportunity to discuss mutual matters as well.

Yours Sincerely,

Andrus Merilo  
Lieutenant General  
Commander of the Estonian Defence Forces

Attached: ABCD invitation by the Minister of Defence and the Director of ICDS

General Vincent Giraud

11 June 2026  
Tallinn, Estonia

*Dear General,*

It is our great pleasure to invite you to participate as a guest and a speaker at the 20th Annual Baltic Conference on Defence (ABCD), taking place on 22-23 September 2026 in Tallinn, Estonia.

ABCD is organised by the International Centre for Defence and Security (ICDS) and the Estonian Ministry of Defence. For two decades, ABCD has been a prominent regional forum bringing together policymakers, military leaders, and academics to discuss key issues in transatlantic, European, and regional defence.

Today, Europe is spending more on defence than at any point since the Cold War, yet the gap between defence needs and actual combat power has never been more consequential. ABCD 2026 titled “Choosing to Win: Building Confidence in Complexity” will examine what it truly takes to deter, defend, and prevail – drawing on battlefield lessons from Ukraine, taking account of the fractures in and strengths of the transatlantic alliance, and reflecting on the hard questions that surround escalation, endurance, and success.


For the second time, ABCD will take place as part of the [Estonian Defence Week \(EDW\)](#) - a week tying together series of events showcasing Estonia’s defence sector. This year’s Estonian Defence Week is titled “How to Win the Next War?” reflecting the changes on and off the battlefield. EDW takes place on 21-25 September and includes ABCD, Defence Exhibition by local and international exhibitors, NATO Open Innovation Conference (NATO ACT), Defence Innovation Day (Tehnopol and NATO DIANA), Estonian Defence Industry Symposium (EDIA), hackathons and other side events.

We would be grateful if you could accept the invitation to join us at this year’s ABCD as a speaker. We kindly ask you to confirm your attendance to Ms Nele Loorents ([nele.loorents@icds.ee](mailto:nele.loorents@icds.ee)), Director of the Conference. Nele stands ready to answer any questions you may have.

For more information, please visit our website: <https://abcd.icds.ee/>.

We hope to see you in Tallinn this autumn.

Yours sincerely,



**Kristi Raik**  
Director  
International Centre for Defence and Security



**Hanno Pevkur**  
Minister of Defence