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From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: AOB for the meeting of the Competitiveness Council on 08 December 2025: Repeated disruptions of civil aviation caused by unmanned aircraft (drones) and smuggling balloons originating from third countries
- Information from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

Repeated disruptions of civil aviation caused by unmanned aircraft (drones) and smuggling balloons originating from third countries

Since October 2025, the Belarusian regime has intensified hybrid operations against Lithuania, focusing on repeated violations of Lithuanian airspace using unmanned flying objects.

In 2025, Lithuania experienced a significant increase in the number of smuggling balloons entering its airspace – an activity orchestrated by the Belarusian regime and deliberately targeting the safety of Lithuanian airspace. Between the beginning of the year and 27 October, Lithuanian authorities detected 541 smuggling balloons and 177 unauthorized drones in Lithuanian airspace. As a result, Lithuanian Airports were forced to suspend operations on six occasions in October alone, affecting 192 flights, 18 airlines, and nearly 30,000 passengers. In October-November nearly 250 flights, 18 airlines, and more than 35,500 passengers were affected, totaling in almost two full days of airport closures. The resulting losses for airlines, airports, and passengers amounted to several hundred thousand euros.

Besides direct revenue losses for Lithuanian Airports, the overall economic damage for Lithuania is substantial, as repeated air travel disruptions affected business activities and trade, delayed commercial projects and undermined the confidence of international partners and investors, resulting in long-term economic consequences and reputational damage.

Lithuania holds the Belarusian regime, led by Alexander Lukashenka, directly responsible for this hybrid campaign, which follows a pattern consistent with previous actions such as the instrumentalized migration. Public statements and reactions by Lukashenka indicate that the regime is fully aware of these hybrid attacks and unwilling to prevent them.

In response, and after repeated diplomatic contact, Lithuania decided on 29 October 2025, to close one of the last two operational border crossing points with Belarus (Šalčininkai) and to restrict operation of the second point (Medininkai).

Although the borders were reopened after 3 weeks. During this period, roughly 1,000 Lithuanian trucks have been stranded on the Belarusian side of the border due to Belarusian decisions. These actions created uncertainty for businesses and led to significant economic losses. For example, the direct losses caused by the closures alone are estimated at around 6 million euros. Secondary impacts, such as reduced trade in goods and services, and decline in tourism flows, could reach up to 12.6 million euros *per day*.

These hybrid actions, and the disruptions they create, negatively affect Lithuania's investment climate and its ability to attract foreign investment. Persistent risks linked to hybrid attacks – such as airspace violations, logistical disruptions, and uncertainty at the border – may be seen by investors as additional geopolitical and operational threats, potentially delaying investment decisions or diverting them to more stable regions.

Prolonged instability could further undermine Lithuania's reputation as a reliable business environment and may result in increased requirements for insurance, contingency planning, and operational adjustments that companies might be unwilling to take on.

More broadly, this ongoing instability also risks eroding both Lithuania's and the EU's overall competitiveness, as repeated airspace disruptions, which are happening not only in Lithuanian, undermine the smooth functioning of regional value chains and weakens the confidence of global partners.

Lithuania expresses its gratitude to EU institutions, Member States, and international partners for their solidarity, and **calls to:**

- Clearly acknowledge and identify the Belarus regime's actions as hybrid attacks against an EU Member State.
- Engage in the preparation of a new sanctions package targeting Belarusian officials and institutions responsible for these operations.
- Increase pressure on Belarus in international organizations and call for an immediate end of such hybrid actions against the EU.
- Encourage EU Member States to strengthen joint resilience measures, including coordinated airspace monitoring, information-sharing, and rapid response mechanisms to mitigate the impact of hybrid attacks on transport and critical infrastructure, to ensure the overall protection of EU borders against violations of any kind and the peace and well-being of EU citizens.
