



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



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**Statement of the President of the European Council,
Herman Van Rompuy,
at the Chicago NATO Summit**

I should like to thank Secretary-General Rasmussen for the invitation to this Summit and congratulate President Obama on its successful hosting. A strong transatlantic relationship, based on common values, remains of fundamental importance to Europe.

Today's meeting will provide an opportunity for the EU to demonstrate how we can contribute to regional and global security, in close cooperation with our partners. Our most important contribution to European security may have happened through EU enlargement, through uniting our continent. This process continues. The EU plays a major stabilising role in the Western Balkans, which is moving towards the EU.

Internationally, Europeans are increasingly speaking and acting in a united manner on key security challenges, such as proliferation, terrorism, cyber security and piracy, or regional issues such as Iran, Syria and North Korea.

The EU's strength lies in a comprehensive approach to security, drawing on a broad palette of tools. A good example is the Horn of Africa, where EU civilian and military crisis management operations are accompanied by political, diplomatic, development and humanitarian action.

Afghanistan is another example of such a comprehensive approach: the EU is making a strong contribution to Afghan security as well as sustainable economic development. This week, the EU reaffirmed its long-term commitment to support Afghanistan during transition and the decade of transformation. In the security sector, our focus will remain on strengthening civilian policing.

P R E S S

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Altogether 24 crisis management operations have been launched under the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy over the past eight years. To further contribute to security in our neighbourhood and globally, we need to enhance our ability to act.

At times of financial constraints and the changing geo-strategic environment, the challenge for Europe is to do better with less. There is an urgent need for Europeans to do more together, to allow Member States to acquire capabilities that they cannot reach individually and avoid costly duplication of investments. Europe still spends 200 billion Euros annually on defence. This is a significant amount, but it has to be spent more effectively and produce better output.

The EU's initiative on Pooling and Sharing provides a common response to European capability shortfalls. I am happy that EU Member States' efforts on Pooling and Sharing and the efforts of the European Defence Agency are yielding results. Cooperative projects have been agreed to in key areas, which are also of NATO's interest. There is Air-to-Air Refuelling, but also Medical Support, Maritime Surveillance, and Training.

These are promising steps, but they are only a beginning. There is a need for political leadership in all countries to achieve a longer-term policy, which is more sustainable and structured. Firstly, we should explore how Pooling and Sharing could be embedded more systematically in national defence planning. Secondly, we need to strengthen the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base, which is critical to developing Europe's future capabilities. Innovation is key to the future, as NATO has also recognised in its Smart Defence concept.

The EU highly values the Strategic Partnership with NATO. We are moving ahead in a pragmatic way, step-by-step, to strengthen EU-NATO cooperation.

I would like to briefly highlight positive developments in three areas: firstly, we have reinforced political dialogue with the NATO Secretary-General and Allies. Further formal and informal meetings should provide us a channel to discuss Bosnia, Kosovo and Libya or topics such as cyber security.

Secondly, the EU and NATO continue to operate side-by-side in crisis management, in the Balkans, Afghanistan and against piracy off the coast of Somalia. Libya taught us a lesson about the necessity to cooperate. There is already closer liaison between our staffs; we need to continue along this path.

Thirdly, the EU and NATO have effective and productive cooperation in the area of development of military capabilities, which must continue to ensure that our initiatives are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

To conclude, Mr. Secretary-General, I would like to appeal to all parties to support strengthening the EU-NATO Strategic Partnership. A strong Europe is in the interest of the Atlantic Alliance. The EU is committed to continuing close cooperation with NATO beyond Chicago and ensure efficient results for the benefit of international security.