Edited remarks by
Javier SOLANA,
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at the meetings of EU defence ministers in the framework of the
General Affairs and External Relations Council

CAPACITES MILITAIRES

• Nous venons, lors du Comité directeur de l'Agence Européenne de Défense (AED), de prendre des décisions pour accroître la disponibilité de hélicoptères, et du transport aérien en général, qui manifestent notre volonté de progresser vers des résultats concrets, qui auront un impact direct sur notre capacité à mener les opérations de l'UE; Je me félicite de ces nouvelles avancées et vous invite à poursuivre ces efforts, exigeants, mais aussi indispensables;

• En à peine dix ans, grâce à ces efforts nous nous sommes dotés d'outils nécessaires à la conduite de nos opérations, en particulier d'un outil de réponse rapide, les Groupements tactiques;

• En matière de capacités, nul Etat membre, nulle organisation ne peut prétendre à l'exhaustivité ou à l'universalité. Lorsque les besoins se recoupent, nous n'avons d'autre choix que de coopérer; Enfin, je me félicite de la recherche permanente de synergies entre les instruments civils et les instruments militaires, gage d'efficacité opérationnelle, de cohérence et de rationalisation. La création du Crisis Management and Planning Directorate sera une avancée dans ce domaine dont l'UE dans son ensemble bénéficiera très vite;

• Bien sûr, des progrès restent à faire, par exemple dans le domaine de la réponse rapide, du transport stratégique, ou du partage du poids financier du développement des capacités et de la conduite des opérations, tout particulièrement lorsque les budgets nationaux sont revus à la baisse; Mais je sais que les travaux en cours et les réflexions que nous avons lancées nous permettront de nouvelles avancées;
ESDP OPERATIONS

EUFOR ALTHeA (BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA)

- We are continuing with our planning for the future of Operation ALTHeA. Today, we approved the Concept of Operations (CONOPS), the first technical step for a possible evolution, so that we are ready for a decision when conditions allow. However, we have not yet taken a final decision on the future of the Operation. Operation ALTHeA continues to provide reassurance on the ground and we are maintaining our long-term commitment to Bosnia, with a visible presence;

- As a sign of this commitment, I am travelling to Sarajevo tomorrow, with US Vice-President Biden. Together, we will meet the authorities and all the political leaders to underline our engagement and to stress that all parties should assume their responsibility to ensure that the state of BiH functions well;

EUFOR TCHAD/RCA

- Le redéploiement de EUFOR se termine. Les résultats obtenus sont tangibles et reconnus. Nous pouvons nous en féliciter et retenir pour l'avenir ce premier exemple d'approche globale et l'excellente expérience de coopération avec les Nations Unies;

- Je tiens encore une foi rendre hommage au Commandant d'opération, le General Nash, au Commandant de Force, le General Ganascia, à tous les soldats de l'UE et des pays qui ont participé à EUFOR.

PIRACY - OPERATION EU NAVFOR / ATALANTA

- I visited the Operational Headquarters of Operation ATALANTA in Northwood, UK, last week. I was very impressed by the professionalism and excellent work done there by our naval forces;

- Our operation has already achieved very good results. It has escorted more than 20 World Food Programme ships since it began in December last year, allowing 130 thousand tonnes of food to be delivered. Thanks to Operation EU NAVFOR ATALANTA, 1.6 million mouths are being fed each day; We are also providing direct protection for a number of vessels, including those chartered by the UN to transport supplies to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM);

- We are capturing a growing number of pirates - the total now stands at 52 and we have handed over 51 for prosecution to the Kenyan authorities;

- However, the pirates are operating in a wider area. We have to adapt our operation accordingly - we are currently extending our operation; We need to boost our force generation, particularly for maritime surveillance aircraft which enables us to extend our surveillance zone;

- The European Union mobilized very quickly to address the problems in Somalia; the international conference in Brussels last month highlighted the agreement between all parties, including the Somali government, that Europe should continue and step up its efforts;
• This is why we must look at extending Operation Atalanta in 2010; we must also look at new measures - to combat piracy and also to tackle the underlying problems; I will be putting forward some ideas at our six-monthly review in June;

• In three weeks, a new operations commander will succeed Admiral Jones. I would like to take this opportunity today to recognize the remarkable work done by Admiral Jones. I congratulate him on his promotion and I wish him the best of luck in his new duties;

**SOMALIA - RECONSTRUCTION OF THE SECURITY SECTOR**

• The donors' meeting of 23 April was a great success. The international community is strongly committed to supporting the "Djibouti process" and the Transitional Federal Government led by President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed; Recent events highlight the urgent need for concrete action to support the Transitional Government; the latest news from Mogadishu is very worrying;

• We will be studying possible ways of contributing further to the security sector, including the Somali National Security Force (NSF); and we will continue to provide security for the delivery of humanitarian aid;

**PARTNERSHIPS**

**EU-NATO**

• Our relationship has steadily improved over the past ten years; The Berlin Plus arrangements work well; Operation ALTHEA illustrates that; We have seen good progress with capabilities development. Thanks to the efforts of all Member States, we have avoided inconsistencies between our two processes. The differences as well as the similarities between our approaches enable us to address the shortfalls that overlap between the EU and NATO from different angles. Helicopter availability is a good example of how we can work effectively and pragmatically together on concrete projects to achieve tangible results;

• At the Strasbourg/Kehl Summit, NATO and in particular the US, recognised the importance of a stronger and more capable European defence, and the efforts of the EU were welcomed; We must also be able to cooperate in the theatre in Kosovo and in Afghanistan;

**EU/UN COOPERATION IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT**

• The EU's relationship with UN is vital, institutionally and operationally; EU cooperation with the UN is becoming broader and deeper; We work successfully side-by-side in several theatres. Many of them were discussed today;

• Our cooperation on the ground is good, as we have seen with the planning of EUFOR Tchad/RCA and the handover from EUFOR Tchad/RCA to MINURCAT;

• We have worked in hand to examine further areas of cooperation including those outlined by the Presidency, namely support to African capacity-building; Security Sector Reform; early warning; and planning and handover of operations;
PARTENARIAT STRATÉGIQUE ENTRE L'UNION EUROPÉENNE ET L'AFRIQUE

• Nous continuons à nous investir pleinement dans le partenariat "Paix et sécurité" avec l'Afrique qui constitue le partenariat le plus avancé de la stratégie conjointe UE/Afrique adoptée à Lisbonne en 2007;

• Notre action est orientée à la fois vers l'Union africaine et les Organisations Régionales Africaines qui constituent la base opérationnelle de la Force Africaine en Attente. Les principaux besoins sont liés au manque de ressources humaines qui affaiblissent les structures politico-militaires. Le recrutement et la formation de personnel civil/police et militaires africains sont indispensables.

EXCHANGE OF YOUNG OFFICERS INSPIRED BY ERASMUS

• The European initiative for the exchange of young officers inspired by the Erasmus programme has started well and enjoys support; I would like to thank all the Member States that have actively engaged in and committed to the different projects; Voluntary active engagement is key, particularly as this initiative is a long-term project;

• Focusing on the initial phase of our officer training and education seems very small step but any measures taken promptly to improve our human resources responsible for implementing CFSP/ESDP will impact over time and help to make Europe more effective;

• Secondly, I believe it is a good approach to give a specific role to the European Security and Defence College in the implementation of the initiative, using its permanent Secretariat and the Executive Academic Board;