EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY

Brussels, 8 July 2008

EU GOVERNMENTS ENDORSE CAPABILITY PLAN FOR FUTURE MILITARY NEEDS, PLEDGE JOINT EFFORTS

(BRUSSELS, 8 JULY 2008)

European Union governments today endorsed a Capability Development Plan (CDP) defining the future military needs and priorities of European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and agreed to use it to guide future national defence investment decisions and to seek opportunities to collaborate so as to address their short-to-longer-term military requirements coherently.

The CDP, developed over the past 18 months by the European Defence Agency, its 26 participating Member States (pMS), the EU Military Committee and the EU Council General Secretariat, contains a significant body of analysis from which conclusions and an initial tranche of practical proposals for action have been derived. It was presented to a meeting of the EDA’s Steering Board, made up of directors of capability planning from the 26 pMS.

“The CDP provides the picture all Member States need to take into account when planning future capability development agendas and finding the right balance between ambition and resources. Linking theory to practice is a job for everyone,” said Javier Solana, Head of the Agency.

“It is quite clear, however, that the CDP is not a supranational military equipment or capability plan which aims to replace national defence plans and programmes. It should support, not replace national decision-making,” he added.

The CDP is an attempt to address the well-documented fragmentation in demand for European military capabilities, caused in part by a lack of coordinated military requirements and comprehensive priorities. It builds on the EDA’s Long-Term Vision report, published in 2006.
Among its principal conclusions are the importance of intelligence and information-sharing during operations in complex environments; the need for flexible and agile responses to unpredictable threats; the requirement to coordinate military and civilian activities in crisis management operations; and the challenge of recruiting talented and well-qualified personnel for the armed forces.

As part of the effort, Member States contributed to a database of the national programmes and priorities, which has initially revealed a large number of different areas where more than one country was working on similar ideas. The meeting agreed with the Agency’s proposals for how the appropriate collaboration could be encouraged in each of these areas.

The Steering Board agreed on 12 topics for specific action, such as countermeasures against improvised explosive devices, computer network defence and medical support, and asked the Agency to prepare a detailed way forward for each set of priorities.

“A capability-driven Agency means: investing in and delivering those capabilities which the CDP has listed as the needs for tomorrow, both in the short and the longer term,” said EDA Chief Executive Alexander Weis.

Separately, the Steering Board also reviewed progress on existing initiatives designed to address capability needs whose importance was underlined by the CDP.

- To improve the availability of helicopters for EU operations, the meeting agreed to a series of measures on helicopter training, which would allow cooperation between Member States and increase the operational availability of aircrew, and on upgrading existing aircraft.

- The Steering Board considered a report on Network-Enabled Capabilities – the use of information technology to link all actors in an operation together so that information can be reliably shared – and agreed that the Agency should fund a study on how the NEC concept could be implemented. The NEC concept described in the report lays particular stress on the potential such technologies to support a unified effort of civilian and military entities involved in operations.

- Protection against sea mines, maritime surveillance, biological agent detection and combating terrorist bombs were among the force protection issues discussed as areas where
the Agency is developing significant capabilities to enhance the operational effectiveness of European military forces.

- Following an EDA conference this year on the role of third-party commercial support for logistics, the Steering Board agreed to set up a trial of a European Support Platform for connecting industry with planners and commanders to provide help to meet the logistics requirements of EU operations.
EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY

- Background information -

The European Defence Agency (EDA) was established by the Council on 12 July 2004. It is designed "to support the Council and the Member States in their effort to improve European defence capabilities in the field of crisis management and to sustain the ESDP as it stands now and develops in the future". More specifically, the Agency is ascribed four functions, relating to:

a) defence capabilities development;
b) armaments cooperation;
c) the European defence technological and industrial base and defence equipment market;
d) research and technology.

These functions all relate to improving Europe's defence performance, by promoting coherence in place of fragmentation.

The EDA is an Agency of the European Union. High Representative Solana is Head of the Agency, chairman of the Steering Board, which acts under the Council's authority and within the framework of guidelines issued by the Council.