

EDA Annual Conference: Taking European defence cooperation to the next level: prospects for the decade ahead

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NATO-EU cooperation in light of EU defence initiatives

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first thank Jorge Domecq for his kind invitation and his flexibility, I just arrived from Paris but could not miss the EDA conference especially since it is the last one of my good friend and colleague Jorge Domecq, at least in his capacity as Chief Executive.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to bring NATO's perspective in the debate on the future of European Defence cooperation. Needless to say, NATO is a key player in this area.

1. Intro – 2019 – year of anniversaries

2019 is a year of significant anniversaries as we remember 75 years since D-Day and 30 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall. It is also an important milestone for our Alliance and the EU and for the new democracies who joined our two Organisations after the Cold War.

EDA's fifteenth anniversary was also celebrated in June. On a personal note, I was very happy to join that celebration as I took a modest part in the design and creation of the Agency in 2004 as a member of the French MOD then.

And of course we celebrate NATO's 70-year anniversary, notably with a meeting of NATO Leaders in London next week.

This is not a small achievement, and it is not just another birthday.

2. NATO alive and kicking

For 70 years, NATO has kept member nations safe by being united and strong.

And by continuously and successfully adapting to new security challenges over the years, from the years of tensions during the Cold War, to conflicts in the Western Balkans in the 1990's and the invocation of Article 5 in 2001 following the terrorist attacks on the United States.

Yet, and despite being tested repeatedly throughout the past 7 decades, NATO remains the single most important contributor to security, stability and peace for the almost one billion citizens in Europe and North America.

Today, we are all facing the most unpredictable security situation in many years: an assertive Russia threatening the Alliance's Eastern flank, instability across the Alliance's Southern flank, cyber and hybrid threats, the rise of China and the dizzying pace of technological change.

NATO has recognized the threats facing the world and has been adapting to the new security environment with the biggest reinforcement of our collective defence in decades.

We have modernized our command structure. We have combat-ready troops deployed in the eastern flank of our Alliance, we have increased the readiness of our forces and we have increased the size of our rapid response forces.

NATO is also new challenges confronting cyber and hybrid threats, in space and threats to our military and civilian telecommunications infrastructure.

Last week, NATO Foreign Ministers declared Space as a new operational domain alongside the air, land, maritime and cyber domains.

Space is essential to the Alliance's defence and deterrence, for early warning, communication and navigation.

This decision by Ministers will allow NATO planners to make requests for Allies to provide capabilities and services, such as hours of satellite communications.

In parallel, for the fifth consecutive year, NATO Allies in Europe and Canada have increased their defence spending. By the end of next year, they will have added more than \$100 billion to their defense budgets since 2016.

And they are collectively determined to keep up the momentum and to do more.

Our responsibility moving forward is to translate these investments into real results. We must invest in the new capabilities our armed forces need, such as advanced fighter

aircraft, attack helicopters, missile defence and surveillance drones.

NATO Allies are committed to modernising the Alliance and investing to deliver key cutting-edge capabilities to the benefit of our shared security through common funded, multinational or national projects.

Let me highlight a few very recent achievements.

Last week, the first of five NATO Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) aircraft landed in Sigonella, Italy, marking an important step in the delivery of the AGS Programme. Initial operational capability is expected for the first half of next year.

NATO signed this week a [one-billion USD] contract to upgrade and modernise the AWACS fleet to extend the lifetime of the fleet until 2035.

And we are also making progress in developing the Alliance Future Surveillance and Control (AFSC), the follow-on capability to the AWACS as we are now firmly engaged in the concept stage.

3. NATO-EU cooperation

Let me stress that NATO is not alone in addressing the new security challenges and developing enhanced capabilities.

NATO and EU share 22 Members, share the same values and the same security environment. 22 countries made the same commitments to peace and security.

And since the security challenges are here to stay, meaningful NATO-EU cooperation will be as important as ever in the coming years. As the Secretary General of NATO said in Paris this morning: “NATO and the EU are two sides of the same coin”.

We must strengthen the relationship that makes our organizations critical strategic partners.

The world has moved in a new phase in which hard power appears to be gaining the upper hand over soft power.

Today, we live in a multipolar world, in which a growing number of countries and political leaders seem to believe that international relations are a zero-sum game.

We cannot choose our conflicts. Conflicts will choose us and will demand our action.

In today’s social media dominated environment, perceptions are at least as important as actions themselves. That requires careful synchronisation of military and non-military capabilities, both in national and transnational contexts.

NATO and EU have to continue working together and build capabilities to guard against the new reality of hybrid threats.

We see that China is becoming a global leader in the development of new technologies.

From 5G to quantum computing, it has set out to gather vast amounts of global data to take the lead in intelligent manufacturing. So we need to understand what the expanding scope of China's influence means for the security of NATO and EU populations, but also for values such as freedom, democracy and the rule of law, which define our societies.

The best way to stay strong and safeguard the rules-based order in this changing environment is to ensure that Europe and North America keep working together.

Today we represent half the world's economic might and half the world's military might.

Both NATO and the EU are stronger and safer when we speak together on the global stage and stand together to face challenges. In this regard, the EU coordinated risk assessment of the cybersecurity of 5G networks issued on 9 October is an important contribution to further work, including in the NATO environment.

There is no doubt that with the two strategic-level Joint Statements signed by the NATO Secretary General and

Presidents Juncker and Tusk we have turned a new page in the NATO-EU narrative.

The 74 lines of efforts cover a wide spectrum ranging from political dialogue, hybrid and cyber threats to operational cooperation in theatre, capability development, support to partners, strategic communication, and exercises.

But the challenge is to translate these lines of effort into concrete actions. And I believe that we can report success in many areas. Let me highlight a couple of the most recent examples of concrete cooperation that are making a positive difference for NATO's and the EU's security.

Last month, NATO and EDA co-hosted the first European Air-to-Air Refuelling conference.

The conference considered Air-to-Air Refuelling in the current security environment from the political, capability development, industrial and operational perspectives, also looking at potential options for the future.

Air-to-Air Refuelling is a flagship of NATO-EU cooperation and an area where European nations are deploying new capabilities.

In May next year, the first of ten A330-MRTT aircraft acquired by 6 Allies, 5 of which are also members of the EU¹, under the Multi-National Multi-Role Tanker Transport aircraft Fleet (MMF)

¹ NE, LU, BE, GE, NO and CZ

project, is due to be delivered, just 8 years from the start of a project which involved at multiple steps NATO, EDA, NSPA, OCCAR and EATC, an alphabet soup indicating the role of NATO, the EU and the many multinational organisations involved in this effort.

EDA and NATO have also greatly increased information sharing on the NATO Defence Planning Process and the EU Capability Development Plan.

This is done through staff-to-staff exchanges and reciprocal participation by EDA and NATO staff in NDPP and CARD bilateral meetings when invited by NATO Allies or EU Member States.

4. the next level

In NATO, as the Secretary General regularly highlights, we are firm believers in a stronger European Defence and the recent initiatives that make the EU more active in this field.

If done right, this brings more investment in Defence, more European capabilities, a fairer sharing of the transatlantic burden, and as a result, a stronger NATO.

Overall, in the area of capability development, NATO and EU efforts are broadly coherent.

However, we cannot take this statement for granted and we must pursue additional efforts, by both the staffs and the nations, to

ensure coherence and complementarity, both in terms of priorities and outputs.

In addition, NATO will continue to call on the fullest involvement of non-EU Allies in the EU defence initiatives, as their participation can increase competitiveness, ensure access to advanced technology, and contribute to preserving the Trans-Atlantic relationship.

In other words, while more can be done, our strategic-level cooperation has greatly improved.

We now need to ensure that it is matched with concrete developments as soon as possible.

5. conclusion

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Next week, NATO-EU cooperation should feature high on the agenda of the Leaders' meeting.

Allied leaders are expected to recognize that efforts in the EU context by Allies who are members of both organisations are contributing to burden-sharing and reinforcing the security of all our members.

However, the achievements to date should not be taken for granted in light of the current challenges.

Nations and staffs in both our organizations will need to build on the political impetus of the two Joint Declarations and the successes of our concrete cooperation.

There is no doubt that the next decade will require a strong NATO and a strong EU.

And this will require an even stronger NATO-EU bond. Addressing the challenges ahead of us together will make us stronger.

Let me close by quoting the NATO Secretary General: "As history shows, when we stand united no barrier is too great."