



Annual Conference: 28 November 2019

Welcome speech by Jorge Domecq.

Chief Executive, European Defence Agency

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Dear Ministers, Generals, Admirals,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It is a great honour and pleasure to welcome you today to the 2019 Annual Conference of the European Defence Agency;
- I am delighted to see so many senior representatives from governments, the armed forces, EU institutions, NATO, industry, think tanks and the media here;
- Breaking with our tradition of the past years of focusing our annual conferences on pressing capability topics, we have chosen a more programmatic approach this year.

- “Taking European defence cooperation to the next level: Prospects for the decade ahead” is the title of this year’s conference, coming at the very beginning of a new institutional cycle and three years into what many call the biggest ever leap in European defence cooperation.
- Three years after the EU Global Strategy and the subsequent launch of major EU defence initiatives – the revised Capability Development Plan (CDP), the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European Defence Fund (EDF) – now is the right time to take stock of the implementation of these tools and assess their future prospects.
- The European Defence Agency, as you are all aware, plays a central role in the implementation of the new tools and will continue to do so, be it as the architect of the Capability Development Plan, the CARD Secretariat, as part of the PESCO Secretariat - together with the EEAS including the EU Military Staff – , as the European hub for collaborative defence projects, as the manager of the PADR or as provider of expertise to the EDIDP.
- And even though much has been achieved over the last years, even more needs to be done.

- In June this year, the European Council set four priorities as part of its strategic agenda for the next five years. One priority is “protecting citizens and freedoms” while the other is “promoting Europe’s interests and values in the world”. Clearly, both are closely linked to defence and to our capacity to act autonomously.
- If we want EU defence initiatives to lead towards a more coherent and integrated European defence landscape with a more capable, deployable, interoperable and sustainable set of military capabilities and forces that are able to deliver on these strategic priorities, we need sustained efforts and unfaltering political commitment.
- Central to all these efforts, will be how EU defence initiatives will be embedded in national processes. This is certainly not an easy task. In my discussions in capitals I have seen that embedding the EU defence initiatives into national processes not only puts a burden on financial and human resources but it also requires a complete change in mindset, sometimes even a change of culture.
- I am particularly looking forward to debating this topic with Ministers and various senior representatives of national administrations and armed forces among us today.

- To fulfil the EU's heightened ambition in security and defence, we also need the technological and industrial base to underpin it. We are honoured to have colleagues from small and big industries with us today to hear their views on how to advance European defence.
- The pace of change in EU defence continues, only yesterday the new college of European Commissioners has been confirmed by the European Parliament. For the first time this college includes with Thierry Breton a Commissioner who will have a Directorate-General under his wing responsible for defence industry and space. This change is remarkable as it is welcome.
- The new EU defence tools will ultimately be judged on what we build with them. As you know, 47 projects have been launched through PESCO and the first call for EDIDP projects was launched before the summer. The first full CARD cycle is now underway.
- Work has started and I therefore do not tire to advocate for strategic patience as regards seeing the first results.
- However, it is equally important that these various tools are implemented in a coherent and efficient way. A key responsibility here lies with the European institutions and bodies to build upon what we have learned and to thoroughly conduct the review processes.

- Our mission at EDA is clear – support our Member States. It is a mission that drives our daily work and shapes how we make EU defence initiatives a reality.
- This is where we are today, and it is certain that much has been achieved so far. But what about tomorrow or even the next decade ? Will the defence initiatives be enough, will they be successful or do we need to go further? These and more questions will be discussed today.
- Before moving ahead, allow me to briefly outline the programme of the day:
- We are very privileged to welcome Mr Barnier who is today best known for his decisive role as EU Chief Negotiator with the UK. However, for the Agency, his role as the chair of the 2002 “Working Group on Defence” which laid the foundation for the creation of EDA as we know it today, will never be forgotten.
- I then have the honour to moderate a high-level strategic debate on the future of European defence cooperation among the Ministers of Defence of Luxembourg, [Poland], Portugal and Austria before leaving the floor to General Graziano, the Chairman of the EU Military Committee.
- The first panel will take a closer look at the new defence initiatives and what more needs to be done to make defence

cooperation a reality before General Kivinen, the Chief of Defence of Finland, addresses the conference on behalf of the Finnish Presidency.

- After the lunch break, we are looking forward to welcoming Camille Grand on EU-NATO cooperation in light of the new EU defence initiatives.
- EDA's Deputy Chief Executive, Olli Ruutu will have the pleasure to hand over the award to the winner of the 2019 EDA Defence Innovation Prize, during a short ceremony later this afternoon, before we look at the technological and industrial dimension to underpin the EU level of ambition.
- Allow me to finally insist that today is YOUR conference, with ample opportunity to ask questions to our speakers. Please seize this opportunity for lively debate and exchange of views, and of course, networking;
- But now, without further ado, let us start with today's programme. Unfortunately, our outgoing Head of Agency cannot join us in person. We are nevertheless pleased that Mrs Mogherini will address us in a video message.