



Annual Conference: 27 March, 2014

DRAFT Intervention by Madame Claude-France Arnould, Chief
Executive of the European Defence Agency

Check against delivery

It is an honor to welcome you today to the 2014 annual EDA conference, here in the Albert Hall in Brussels.

I am particularly pleased to see so many senior government officials, senior officers, members of parliament, EU institutions, industry and think tanks. Because, as the Heads of State and Government agreed during the European Council in December, “Defence Matters”. And why it matters has become increasingly clear.

Everywhere around us, we are seeing security and defence challenges materialize. Some of them new; some of them deeply rooted in history. Crisis situations increase, rather than decrease.

And they do not always arise in faraway places. On the contrary, it can happen, and does happen in our neighbourhood, on our borders.

So, indeed! Defence matters! How could it not? How could this not be a priority for us? Not tomorrow. Now.

Not all of you know Paul Reynaud, who, at one of the tragic moments of our shared history, striving as finance minister to persuade the French parliament to increase the defence budget, said: “*Ayez l’armée de votre politique ou la politique de votre armée*”. « *Have the army of your politics, or the politics of your army* ». He got his funding. But far too late.

Of course, we live in different times. But I believe this quotation remains pertinent. Europe cannot have the ambition to be a “security provider”, to stand for its values and interests, without the capacity to sustain this ambition including when military action or “potential” military action is required. Let’s not be too late to give priority to security and defence, priority to the proper capabilities we need now and tomorrow, priority to increased efficiency through cooperation and synergies with the EU instruments. Shall we make 2014 the year in which we truly enhance an efficient cooperation?

2014 is a special year.

This year, we commemorate the beginning of World War I. One hundred years ago, our nations mobilized their full economic, industrial and human potential to inflict death and destruction on each other.

Some historians speak of a “*European civil war*” which lasted between 1914 and the end of the Cold War. Victor Hugo rightly stated: “*Une guerre entre Européens est une guerre civile.*” “*A war between Europeans is a civil war!*” . I think this sentence too is still valid.

I must mention another anniversary today. An anniversary which I hold particularly dear.

The European Defence Agency is 10 years old. In 1954, the European Defence Community failed to materialize, although it was at the heart of the European idea. 60 years have passed since then. 60 years of success for European construction and unification. EDA was created to apply the same approach of concrete cooperation to defence while respecting national sovereignty.

Thus, between 2004 and 2014, the European Defence Agency has been fostering an atmosphere of trust and assisted member states in developing concrete and increasingly ambitious projects for the future.

10 years is a short time, especially in the context of defence capabilities. Time to foster interest, confidence and credibility; time to learn on the basis of pragmatic sectorial initiatives; to acquire the expertise.

But now it is time to address the big issues that will shape the future of our armed forces. That is the guidance of the Heads of State and Government. Let's make full use of EDA's strengths to achieve this goal.

The institutional strengths in the Lisbon Treaty.

The strengths of the mandate given to the EDA by the European Council of December 2013.

They discussed defence and will do so again next year when the new top leaders in Brussels will have taken up office. We often hear that political will is missing. I disagree. Just the opposite was expressed by the Heads of State and Government, on the basis of a significant input by Ministers of defence.

We have the guidance. Many of you in this room have the responsibility to implement and to seize the opportunity. The political will is there. Let's make sure that the implementation is not missing.

This guidance is on programmes and incentives. This is exactly what we are going to discuss today.

- Programmes: Last year, you voiced the clear request for “programmes” and roadmaps and we have them.
- Without incentives, cooperation will not happen. Cooperation is both counter-intuitive and impossible without some investment. EDA will propose, as required:
 - o a Policy framework, together with EEAS and EUMC;
 - o non-distorting fiscal measures;
 - o Pooled acquisition modalities.

And measures, together with the Commission, to support R&T, Security of Supply, and Industry.

An often recurring remark last year was that the EDA needs more money. Of course, I personally support this statement, but maybe “the need for money” is slightly misleading. The EDA does not need more money for itself; the money is for programmes, which means your programmes!

You helped us a great deal last year to shape our proposals to the ministers and the European Council. Now, help us again, through your ideas.

I would like to reiterate **that this is YOUR conference**. This is a **truly special and unique occasion** where stakeholders from the European Defence Community convene.

I therefore invite you to seize the opportunity to debate the matter at heart. Some of you are on the podium, others are not. But what I strongly encourage is an open discussion.

This afternoon, Cathy Ashton will join us.

We are honored by the participation of Mr Avramopoulos, the Greek Minister of Defence, who hosted and chaired the informal meeting of defence ministers in Athens last month.

The future presidency will be represented by the Italian Understate Secretary, General Rossi. President Obama is omnipresent these days: yesterday in Brussels, today in Rome. Mrs Pinotti had to re-arrange her schedule.

We will also be joined by Minister Ine Eriksen Sørensen from Norway, Minister Pieter De Crem from Belgium and former Polish MOD Mr Bogdan Klich.

I thank you for your presence, your attention and wish you an interesting, dynamic and fruitful day.

Minister Avramopoulos, the floor is yours.