

"TOWARDS A EUROPEAN ARMY"

Berlin, 5 May 2008

Panel II: European forces - chances and obstacles

Intervention by Ana Gomes, MEP

- First of all, I would like to thank the SPD parliamentary group in the Bundestag for inviting me to be here today;
- Sitting in the new Reichstag, in the institutional heart of Germany, almost 63 years to the day after the last shots of the Second World War were fired, and debating the possibility of a single European Army - it makes me think of how far Europe has come since it hit its moral rock bottom;
- Which brings me directly to the debate at hand: history, tradition and old national sovereignty shouldn't be obstacles to a common European defence; to the contrary, history has taught us that only by sharing sovereignty in everything from coal and steel production to military capability development, can Europe be a force for peace and stability - within and outside its own borders;
- Recently I participated in a debate in Brussels about the future of the European Security Strategy, whether the document was ambitious enough and how it should be changed during the French presidency;
- I argued that, while updating the Strategy was a useful exercise, what was vital was the implementation of the document - in other words, **it is not the broad concept of security that is missing; it is not the strategic vision we are lacking: what we need to work on in Europe is the political will to turn that vision into a reality and the institutions to put it into practice;**

- This brings us back to the debate about a single European Army; **before we invest a lot of time and energy in developing a new grand vision for European defence - a single European Army - maybe we should focus on exhausting the potential of the current paradigm, i.e.:** a Common Security and Defence Policy, anchored in the new provisions of the Lisbon Treaty and **based on the principle of increased cooperation, ambitious pooling of scarce resources and role specialisation between the existing national armed forces;**
- For example, let's make sure EU Member States pool purchases of off-the-shelf equipment or take shares in jointly-owned capabilities; also, let's remind our defence ministries that common acquisitions are most successful the further 'upstream' they are started - so we should do much more joint R&D;
- As a first step, let's empower the European Defence Agency by multiplying joint research projects, like the one on Software Defined Radio currently under an EDA umbrella; later, but as soon as possible, we should endow the EDA with its *own* robust Research and Technology budget (CSIS in a 2005 report suggested €200m¹), so it can efficiently develop tools that can then be adopted by interested Member States;
- Let's make full use of the Battlegroup concept to encourage joint training, certification and post-deployment lessons learned; let's expand it to include maritime and air components: and, of course, let's make sure these Battlegroups are actually available to be deployed when they are needed;
- Also, we need to finally learn the negative lessons of the 'costs lie where they fall' system and switch to more common funding for ESDP missions, in order to have fairer burden-sharing and not to discourage those that actually contribute troops;

¹ "European Defence Integration: bridging the Gap Between Strategy and Capabilities", Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), October 2005.

- If we take into account the realities of ESDP, the deep political disagreements around its ultimate goals and the requirement of unanimity in the Council for decisions in this area, **we quickly come to the conclusion that these few examples of what has to be done are already quite ambitious, although they fall firmly within the old, familiar paradigm of increased cooperation between different national armies, which will continue to exist in the foreseeable future;**
- Incidentally, it is this paradigm that lies at the heart of the EDA's '*Long-Term Vision for European Defence Capability and Capacity Needs*', a document that was published in October 2006, but which continues to be the best document around when it comes to identifying future challenges to European defence planning in general and ESDP in particular, and the ways to overcome them;
- The good news of course is that we have more than just a '*Long Term Vision*': we have **the Lisbon Treaty, which holds the potential to take European integration in the field of defence to a whole new level through 'permanent structured cooperation';**
- And this brings us to **the bottom line of today's debate: unless Member States take full advantage of 'permanent structured cooperation', it won't just be a single European Army that will continue to float in the realm of utopia: even the already existing, modest but consensual ambitions of the EU to develop a Common Security and Defence Policy will only slowly and haltingly be translated into reality;**
- In other words, we have the vision, we have the institutional framework, all we need now is the resources and the political will in the capitals;
- To illustrate my point that we already have an ambitious and achievable blueprint for European defence integration, I would like to read a short quote from the famous Protocol on Permanent Structured Cooperation:
- Article 2 of the Protocol says, for example, that participating Member States "*shall undertake to*":

1. "bring their defence apparatus into line with each other as far as possible, particularly by harmonising the identification of their military needs, by pooling and, where appropriate, specialising their defence means and capabilities, and by encouraging cooperation in the fields of training and logistics;
 2. take concrete measures to enhance the availability, interoperability, flexibility and deployability of their forces, in particular by identifying common objectives regarding the commitment of forces, including possibly reviewing their national decision-making procedures;
 3. take part, where appropriate, in the development of major joint or European equipment programmes in the framework of the European Defence Agency;"
- Permanent Structured Cooperation can be launched by a Council Decision under "qualified majority voting after consulting the High Representative" - in other words, no single state will have a veto over the creation of an *avant-garde* of Member States interested in deepening defence integration within the EU framework;
 - We are all curious to see concrete proposals for the operationalization of this new political tool - with clear criteria and benchmarks for participation; hopefully they will be presented if, and as soon as, the Treaty of Lisbon comes into force;
 - I am convinced that the provisions on defence in the Treaty of Lisbon will set the terms of the debate about European defence for the foreseeable future - and in the next decades we will all have to get to grips with the challenge of how to move European armies and defence planners - the last remaining bulwarks of national sovereignty - towards integration and interdependence;
 - I would argue that overcoming this challenge should constitute the blueprint for the future - and not the dream of a single European army;

- A last word: one of the greatest obstacles to a stronger Europe of Defence (in whatever format) is the **reluctance of our decision-makers (us, the politicians) to explain to our citizens what is at stake;**
- A Europe of Defence is only a means to an end, a tool; if we want the EU to act as an independent strategic actor, practicing effective multilateralism, preventing conflicts and exercising its 'responsibility to protect', **we have to find the political courage to argue in favour of the utility of force within specific political contexts - this is not about war, it is about conflict management and conflict management can't always be done with civilian means;**
- To quote from the EDA's Long Term Vision:

"the focus of military efforts will shift to complementing diplomacy in preventing wars from occurring, containing those conflicts that do occur, and discouraging the emergence of parties whose objective it is to contribute to the generation of a crisis"

- Are we as Europeans, or as Socialists and Social Democrats **comfortable with the risks and responsibilities that come with a bigger European role in conflict management?** Have German politicians, for example, been sufficiently bold in explaining the different visions of a Europe of Defence, or even of ESDP?
- In other words, much more important than discussing whether a European Army is, or is not, in the cards, is the need to reflect on the **timidity of certain Member States when it comes to openly debating the advantages and limitations of military tools of crisis-management;**

- The hesitations and ambiguities that plagued the force generation and the actual deployment of both EUFOR DRC in 2006 and EUFOR Chad/CAR now, **seem to indicate that European nations - our governments and public opinions - aren't even sure whether they should put their national military forces at the disposal of an UN-mandated EU-led military operation - the question I leave you with is: why would that change with a single European Army?**