

CONFERENCE DE HAUT NIVEAU

"LES CAPACITÉS EUROPÉENES DE DÉFENSE: ENJEUX ET PERSPECTIVES"

Table Ronde 1: "*Quelles capacités de défense pour quelles missions européennes?*"

- I would like to start by thanking the French Ministry of Defence and the French Presidency for inviting me here to speak today;
- I see this invitation as a recognition of the importance of the European Parliament for the promotion of a Europe of Defence; while we all know that the European Parliament has little say over the military aspects of ESDP, it is also clear **that there can and will be no Europe of Defence against the European Parliament;**
- I, together with some other colleagues in the Parliament, have been a strong advocate of a European project that tackles head-on the most important current strategic challenges: there is no solution to the major threats of today - be it the proliferation of WMD, terrorism, or genocide - without a united Europe under the EU banner;
- We all know that the European missions of the future will be multinational, expeditionary, and deployed in some sort of crisis management context; Europe, the EU, doesn't wage war; and that leads us to the first conclusion: **any *comparison between the EU's and the US's defence budgets, its size and components, is incomplete if it fails to consider that those two actors have totally different aspirations in the field of peace and security;***
- The capabilities Europe must acquire are therefore those that are useful to the successful implementation of the European Security and Defence Policy, the ESDP;

- And there is no point in reinventing the wheel about the capabilities Europe, and the ESDP, need: we have the Headline Goal 2010, we have the EDA's excellent Long-Term Vision for European Defence Capability and Capacity Needs, we have this year's Capability Development Plan and European Armaments Co-operation Strategy, not to speak of last year's Strategy for the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base, which includes the following vital passage (and I quote):

"we need to identify, from a European perspective, the key defence technologies that we must seek to preserve or develop. Military capability need is the prime criterion, but we must also have regard to the needs of autonomy and operational sovereignty, and the need to sustain pre-eminence where this is economically viable."

- The reason why I quote this document is because it is **one of the few European documents that hints at the need for a European defence industrial strategy**; and that is decisive because, in the future, if we want, as Europeans, to be **free to match the operational needs WE identify with the capabilities WE want, we need to develop some sort of strategic autonomy in the field of defence**, at least in those areas Member States have called "**the key defence technologies that we must seek to preserve or develop**";
- In other words, we all know that we need more air-to-air refuelling assets, more helicopters, more strategic transport, more field hospitals and it is no secret that we need to pool, share, procure - and especially *develop* new equipment! - together; we all know that "the closer upstream" coordination starts, the less we will need to worry about interoperability, since it will be built into the DNA of our common equipment; we all know that harmonised military requirements and an end to a fragmented demand will do a lot for the taxpayer and the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base alike;
- But the point is that **this is just the tip of the iceberg; these are only symptoms of an overarching disease that spans our continent: our capitals, for the most part, still do not think European**, our defence ministries do not exactly know the EDA's Long Term Vision by heart and **they are not yet ready to perform the decisive paradigm shift that is necessary to put Europe's puny**

defence budgets at the service of Europe's operational needs, as they reflect ESDP (or even NATO!) requirements;

- Why do we need three European modern fighters - the Typhoon, the Gripen and the Rafale - competing against each other for scarce funding and export opportunities? Why is a country like Portugal aiming to spend over €1 billion from now until 2023 on two submarines that are very far from satisfying any European or even transatlantic capability requirement? Why do we still have over 20 ongoing programmes to develop Armoured Fighting Vehicles?
- Of course we are still paying the price of mistakes made in past decades and of course the EDA has so far done a remarkable job, under both its Chief Executives, to try to change course by banging some heads together in the fields of capabilities, armament cooperation, the defence equipment market and so on; it needs more time and resources to really make a difference; *but in the end it is up to Member States to make the hard choices*;
- And let's face it, *too often Member States are worried about things that have very little to do with putting the necessary military capabilities at the service of ESDP and European missions*;
- Actually, in many instances and at many levels *they are busy protecting their narrow national strategies from the influences of a truly European strategic vision*; or they are *too focussed on their national industries, even if that means buying something they don't really need*; sometimes *officials at the highest levels are involved in opaque and corrupt practices, for which the tax payer ultimately pays the price and which directly impact on the already fragile procurement budgets*; often, *equipment is developed and procured to solidify strategic Alliances with non-European states and not with the operational needs of ESDP in mind*; finally, *two EU Member States continue to pump an obscene amount of money into nuclear arsenals that are totally useless to deal with the strategic challenges Europe is facing and will face in the future*;

- No country has done more to move the Europe of Defence forward than France; and nevertheless, ***our hosts today cling to their expensive nuclear arsenal and their old-fashioned strategic priorities, while they postpone yet again the urgent acquisition of a second aircraft carrier***, to join the old Charles de Gaulle; I can only support the ideas put forward by my colleague in the European Parliament, the former Prime Minister Michel Rocard, who has **advocated some radical cuts in the budget for France's nuclear arsenal, in order to finance the acquisition of a second aircraft carrier: THAT would be a decision with European requirements in mind;**

Or in Michel's own words, as he put them in an article published by Le Figaro last June:

"En tout cas la chose est claire: c'est dans le secteur du nucléaire qu'il faut commencer à faire les économies nécessaires pour fabriquer le deuxième porte-avions, qui, lui, répond concrètement à beaucoup des conflits d'aujourd'hui" ... and, we could add, to what Europe needs.

- There is no point in ring-fencing nuclear arsenals and saying that they are taboo and out of question; ***every country will have their sacred cows and the whole point of the construction of a Europe of Defence is precisely to change the paradigm and plan, develop, buy and act collectively;***
- **So, what are the capabilities we need?**

1. **First:** our European public opinions are averse to - and international law does not allow for - civilian casualties among the populations where our forces operate - we therefore need capabilities that allow for precision and a carefully calibrated application of military force: a good way to start would be to stop producing, procuring, stock-piling and using mines - any mines - and cluster-bombs;

2. **Second:** our European public opinions also abhor military casualties in our own ranks - let's focus on force protection, counter MANPAD (Man-Portable Air Defence) and counter-improvised explosive technologies;

3. **Third:** let's harness the power of network-enabled capabilities not just to make sure that we remain interoperable with US forces - in case we decide to deploy together - but above all to better articulate between military and civilian actors on the ground;

4. **Fourth:** let's work on the speed of deployment and on sustainability, namely by increasing the stock of deployable forces above the current ridiculous level of 5% of Europe's 2 million men and women in uniform;

5. **Fifth:** at this rate, the Russians will soon run out of helicopters to lend us; the funding for helicopter upgrades decided in Deauville was a fantastic first step - chapeau to the French for this initiative.

I will finish by quoting the Background Note on the Capability Development Plan (CDP) presented to the EDA Steering Board on July 8, 2008. In the middle of a text full of brilliant ideas about how to make Europeans get the military kit they actually need, the following passage is quite sobering:

"Where the CDP succeeds in adding [value] is in assisting all p[articipating]M[ember] S[States] to develop their national capability plans in an appropriate balance of forces against ambition and resources, whilst providing a catalyst to identify and launch multinational collaborations for the development of new and enhanced capabilities. Therefore, the CDP is not, and must not be seen as, a Brussels-driven supranational plan with an aspiration to replace national decision-making."

- *In other words, the EDA is not in the miracle business.* It is for Member States to make use of the European Defence Agency's hard work - which they are paying for, by the way - *by urgently plugging all its strategies, plans and decisions into their national decision-making process.*
- If, and when, they decide to do this, they will be able to count on the full support of the European Parliament.