



## Chairman of the European Union Military Committee

### Maltese Presidency High Level Conference

***"Is the Implementation of the EU Global Strategy meeting expectations?"***

Valletta, 28 April 2017

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

First of all, I would like to thank the EU Institute for Security Studies and personally Antonio for the invitation to this High Level Conference. My thanks also go to the Maltese Presidency for co-organising this event. It is a great honour for me!

Reflecting on the motto of the Conference, *"Shared Vision, Common Action, Stronger Europe"*, I realised that although I was familiar with the first two statements, I was not surprised at all by the third one, *"Stronger Europe"*. This is what I believe in; this is my main objective, a *"Stronger Europe"*. Then, there comes the question: *"Why stronger?"* Or, if you wish, *"Why strong at all?"*

The answer to these questions comes to us from the past, 2.500 years ago. Since yesterday you set off the Conference with Aristotle, today I will follow on with Thucydides. The answer is the famous sentence found in the Melian Dialogue. In just fourteen words, it encapsulates the rationale behind the Athenians' decision, as very coldly explained to the Melians, to conquer their city-state, execute the men and enslave their families. *"Because the strong does what he can and the weak suffers what he must"*. That is why we need a STRONGER EUROPE!

Ladies and gentlemen,

Last month's celebrations on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, found the European Union in a transformation mode, in the Security and Defence domain amongst others. The EU Global Strategy set in motion the mechanisms to review and reform not only existing procedures and instruments in these domains but also –and mainly so– the very mind-set behind them. Interests have been identified; a level of Ambition has been agreed and communicated. The conceptual phase is over: Now it is time for deeds.

And deeds are in the works. The establishment of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability, or MPCC, is a tangible proof of the prevailing determination to move from vision to action. The necessary preparatory work for the other major priorities identified in the Global Strategy Implementation Plan, namely PESCO and CARD, is progressing. In sum, a lot has been done in these ten months since the presentation of the Global Strategy. Why? Because it was decided to move directly to action, instead of foot dragging, producing additional papers. But all that has already been accomplished is nothing more than just a prelude of what is still to be - and needs to be - done.

Last week I read an interesting article in the "Foreign Policy" magazine, signed by Andrew Moravcsik, a professor of politics at Princeton University. Its title is *"Europe Is Still a Superpower - And it's going to remain one for decades to come."* The article describes and analyses a view which I fully share and which I personally experienced in most, if not all, of my official visits and discussions with high ranking foreign interlocutors. **This is what we are**, a superpower, and it is now time to take this role **seriously**.

But we **are** a superpower **together**. **Together** means participating in a cooperative way in every domain that results in the increase of the cumulative power of our common project. Security and defence cannot be excluded. Together means **multiplying** shared capabilities **instead of just adding** figures in spreadsheets. In a world that is constantly evolving and moving forward, it means adapting to new realities and being creative and flexible.

When talking about togetherness, no better example to demonstrate this than **PESCO** comes to mind. Permanent Structured Cooperation can become the vehicle that will make any individual Member State's efforts more

efficient in any measurable context. With inclusiveness and transparency as governing principles at least to a certain extent, this project, if properly designed and rightly executed, will unleash the European Union's unexplored potential. Needless to speak of the second- or third-tier benefits that will arise from the cooperation schemes and the development and osmosis of technology. PESCO will provide the framework for synergetic schemes that will carry the EU security and defence projects to the next level.

The **Coordinated Annual Review on Defence** is another and possibly even more tangible example of a cooperative approach to addressing security and defence shortfalls in a financially constrained environment. Europe spends too much money on defence compared to what is actually delivered in terms of capabilities. **This needs to change.** We can get more for the money we invest in our defence. Or, we can pay less for what we already get, if this is adequate. In any case, the way we now operate is an unsustainable and totally flawed business model, if we examine it using purely techno-economic criteria.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I mentioned earlier MPCC as a tangible proof of our determination to move forward with the implementation of the Global Strategy. It is important that we launched our implementation efforts by removing identified shortfalls and by first organising what we already have available before engaging with other mid- to long-term endeavours. The declaration of MPCC's Full Operational Capability, scheduled for 18 May, will be much more than a quick success or a catchy Stratcomm headliner. It will result in the better organising of the military contribution to the European Union's Integrated Approach to conflicts and crises. We assess that our contribution does not constitute more than a modest 10% of the total European effort. This humble 10% though needs to be well organised. This is what MPCC will do.

I want to take advantage of this opportunity to reassure those who fear that we are heading towards the militarisation of Europe, or the substitution of NATO: nothing is further from the truth. A European Army is not in the plans. With almost **1.4 million personnel** in the National Armed Forces of the Member States potentially available for EU-led missions and operations, close to **110 frigates** and approximately **1.700 fighter aircraft**, EU already ranks as

the world's second largest military power. The fact that the majority of them enjoy the benefits of standardisation and interoperability through their NATO membership (or partnership with the Alliance for some others) augments their efficacy and increases the distance from the third power. This is to some extent artificial. In reality, the European Army does not exist. It does not exist because we do not have a Command and Control system at all in place. And we do not plan to create one, at least not in our time. So, the answer is no, we do not plan for a European Army, as we do not need another one. Europe's defence remains NATO's responsibility.

It has to be acknowledged that all these achievements in the implementation of the Global Strategy could not have happened without the excellent relations with NATO and the United States. We all understand and accept, on both sides of the Atlantic, that a strong Europe results in a strong NATO. This is clearly expressed in the form of the 42 common actions that derive from the Warsaw Joint EU\_NATO Declaration.

But, as I said, this power needs to be better organised, in every aspect, in order to produce the expected results:

- There can be only one single entity that plans and conducts missions and operations in the EU organisational chart. That entity has been created and it is the MPCC;
- When discussing organising and coordinating binding commitments with a view to the more demanding missions, PESCO will provide the necessary framework to realise this real European defence cooperation;
- And finally, when addressing the issue that haunts and undermines the efficacy of the European Armed Forces, the multiplicity of different types of equipment designed to perform identical tasks, and therefore the optimisation of the deliverables of the funds spent, CARD is the way ahead.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe that change is unavoidable if we are **to be a credible and concerned** superpower. This entails being in a position to actively and effectively participate in the shaping of tomorrow, using all available tools in

our inventory with wisdom. According to Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, *“Nature abhors a vacuum”*; if the European Union turns away from this role and the responsibilities it brings with it, sooner or later, someone else will rush to fill the gap, harvesting the subsequent gains. In the meantime, the turbulence will be greatly felt. And a foretaste of this turbulence is already being experienced in our days.

I do not believe that we have the right not to stand up to the role. Security is our citizens first and foremost concern, as depicted both in polls and in elections. With 200 billion Euros spent annually on defence supporting the numbers of personnel and equipment mentioned before, the European Union, and to be more precise, the national governments of its Member States, do not have the option of not providing what their people demand: the security they deserve and in which they invest as tax-payers. To me, there is no other option than to move forward. **We need a stronger Europe.**

Thank you.

Edited by Captain (GRC/N) Vasileios Loukovitis