Chairman of the European Union Military Committee

Speech at the Ministry of Defence of Myanmar

"The European Union as a Security Provider and the Role of the Military"

Nay Pyi Taw, 06 June 2016

Officers,

It is a great honour for me to be here today at your Ministry of Defence. And it is at the same time a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to address fellow officers. Despite our different origins, we, the military, we speak the same "language" and this is a "bridge" that helps us come closer to each other. A "bridge" that will bring Burma and the European Union closer, for their mutual benefit.

There are three main points I want to make today:

- First of all, that the European Union is a credible and important global security actor
- Second, that the European Union applies a Comprehensive Approach to establish and maintain security
- And finally, that in doing so, and addressing the contemporary challenges and threats, the European Union seeks Co-operation and Partnership.

As I have the extreme honour to be the first high ranking EU official to meet with your new government, let me briefly introduce you to the Institution I represent. The European Union is a globally recognised entity, enjoying an "observer with enhanced participation rights" status at the United Nations General Assembly. It consists of 28 Member-States with more than 500 million citizens. It is the world's biggest trader, accounting for 16.5% of the world's imports and exports.

To manage the complex interplay of national and EU competences, there is a European Parliament, a European Commission, and an EU Council of Ministers. In the past five years, the EU has developed an External Action Service to deal with EU foreign, security and defence matters; you may consider it as the EU Ministry of Foreign Affairs with responsibilities also extending into the area of Defence. The EU maintains diplomatic relations with nearly all the countries in the world. It has strategic partnerships with key international players.
As the European Union is represented worldwide as one entity, it has to have one External Policy to follow, the EU Common Security and Defence Policy. The High Representative leads the European External Action Service and chairs the Council of Foreign Ministers as well as the meetings of the Defence Ministers. Considering this, it becomes evident that the High Representative functions not only as the "Minister of Foreign Affairs" of the European Union but also as its "Minister of Defence" in some aspects.

Every day work is performed by permanent bodies, such as the Political and Security Committee dealing with Common Foreign Policy and Common Security and Defence Policy. It consists of ambassadors from the EU Member-States. The decisions taken at this, political, level are translated into actionable proposals at the next level, the Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management Committee, or CivCom and the Military Committee. With this structure, the working relationship between the political leadership and the military is clearly defined and the political oversight of the military is formally conducted. We should not forget that we are another means to achieve political objectives.

The Common Security and Defence Policy is governed by the "Comprehensive Approach" principle, a holistic, tailored-made approach to our relations with every respective collocutor we have. In this Comprehensive Approach, each and every instrument at the EU's disposal is used, if relevant and if bringing added value, in order to achieve the objectives mutually agreed, to optimise the use of the resources allocated and to maximise their results.

The European Union Military Committee (EUMC) is the highest military body set up within the Council. It is composed of the Chiefs of Defence (CHOD) of the Member States. The Military Committee exercises military direction of all EU military activities and provides the Political and Security Committee (PSC) with advice and recommendations on military matters. Myself, as Chairman, I have been elected by the Chiefs of Defence of the Member States and appointed by the Council for a three year term. My function is three-fold:

- I chair the meetings of the Military Committee,
- I act as the Military Advisor to the High Representative, and
- I am the primary point of contact of the Commanders of all CSDP military Operations and Missions.

Gentlemen,

The European Union is NOT a security Organization. This may sound a weakness but, actually, it is its strength. Because the European Union being a multidimensional entity, it possesses a wide array of tools at its disposal. Tools in the areas of defence, security, diplomacy, finance, trade, development and humanitarian aid. And the big challenge is to create and apply in a strategically coherent and efficient manner, the optimal mix of these tools to address the situation each time at hand. This is the Comprehensive Approach, the EU's trademark!
While the European Union is not a Security Organization, it is nevertheless a Security provider. We should always bear in our minds that the ultimate solution to a crisis will always be political, and will definitely require the use of diplomatic and civilian means just as much as military ones.

The military plays an important role in achieving this:

- **Inside** the European Union, the military is probably the most flexible, adaptable, available and deployable instrument in its toolbox

- **Externally**, our Missions and Operations are mainly of an Advisory or Training character.

Their mission in most of the occasions is not to provide security “per se”. We provide training of the local Armed Forces to provide security by themselves. We try to create a sustainable safe and secure environment not by using our own troops but by building these countries’ capacity to take care of their own security. And there is a very strong rationale behind this. A phrase, attributed by some to the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu, best describes what we are trying to achieve:

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime."

This is the only way to build a sustainable Safe and Security Environment, which is a prerequisite for development and growth to come. Security has to be sustainable. Nations have to have ownership and responsibility over the security of their citizens and their defense. This is what we do. We train and advise them on how to effectively achieve this, but in a way that is in line with the internationally recognized and followed code of conduct. We make them efficient and responsible.

Today, the European Union is been more engaged than ever before in the military domain. Approximately **3,500 military troops** are deployed in 6 EU military Operations and Missions in Africa, in the Mediterranean Sea and in the Balkans. This is the highest number of military operations and military training or advisory missions the European Union has ever run at the same time. I will briefly present you what we objectives are in each of these missions.

- **The EU Naval Operation Atalanta** is tackling piracy off the coast of Somalia and in the Indian Ocean since 2008. Compared to previous years piracy at sea is now at the lowest level. However it does not mean that the threat has disappeared. Capability and intent are still present. The only thing missing and results in zero piracy incidents, is opportunity. And this is what we deny to the pirates.

- **In Somalia**, the EU Training Mission is helping building up the new Somali Armed Forces. Over the past years more than 5,000 Somali military personnel have been successfully trained and are now contributing to foster stability in their country alongside their African Union partners.
In Mali, the EU is assisting the Malian authorities in building up their own professional military capabilities. About 555 military personnel from 23 EU Member States are engaged in the professional training and the provision of advice to the Malian Ministry of Defence. As of today 8 Malian Battalions have been trained and have assumed the responsibility to provide a Safe and Secure Environment for their fellow citizens.

EUMAM RCA is an Advisory Mission that followed the very successful EUFOR RCA Operation that ended in 2015. Now that the country has successfully held elections, the Military Advisory Mission will be succeeded by a Training one.

Since last June a large maritime operation has been launched in the Southern Central Mediterranean, Operation Sophia. The aim of this military operation is to identify, capture and dispose of vessels as well as enabling assets used, or suspected of being used, by migrant smugglers or traffickers. Twenty four Member-States contribute to this Operation which is currently in the Phase that allows EUNAVFOR MED assets to conduct boarding, search, seizure and diversion, on the high seas, of vessels suspected of being used for human smuggling or trafficking.

Last, but most certainly not least, let me also mention the EU's military engagement in Europe, in the Balkans, in Bosnia Herzegovina where EU troops have guaranteed a safe and secure environment for the population for more than 11 years now.

Bearing in mind all the CSDP operations and missions mentioned, I believe that it became obvious that the European Union is an important security provider, with the military being one out of a wide range of tools involved. Today, we understand that internal security in Europe cannot exist without an external dimension.

The Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU is an open project. We, the military, have to be prepared for what we can never fully know beforehand. But, this is a task very difficult for any nation, or even EU to take up by itself. In order to face the very wide range of challenges and threats, the EU does not restrict itself to cooperation just among its Member States.

Partnerships can build upon the knowledge, expertise and specific capabilities of partners. Therefore, the EU is firmly committed to working in close collaboration with partners. Nine partner countries with about 350 troops are contributing to our missions and operations. I thank them for this.

Together, we extend European Union's physical borderline. Homeland defence begins abroad, in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Mali, Central African Republic. It begins right where the problem exists, not where the symptoms appear. We therefore create a new, far-away from us, borderline, which we "defend" not with walls and fences and bunkers, but by building security and
prosperity. By restoring hope, trying, with the use of "Soft" Power and security, to create favourable conditions for the local population to stay home.

Defence is usually regarded as waiting for the threat to appear at your borders and attack you first, before you respond and repel. We provide defence and security to our societies by going out to the source of the problems, or the potential ones and deal with them before they reach their “flash or critical point”.

Gentlemen,

Let me conclude:

The European Union is a credible and important provider of peace and security in the world through its many civilian and military EU missions and operations.

The European Union's approach to crisis is always comprehensive and includes also diplomacy, security, defence, finances, trade, development, and humanitarian aid. So, the military is only one of many tools.

The EU's Common Security and Defence Policy is an open project. Security challenges arise around the whole world. No country can solve all problems on its own, however powerful it may be. Therefore international cooperation and partnership are crucial elements to maintain or establish security. The EU's Common Security and Defence Policy builds on these principles. And the military is an essential element to it.

The European Union's Comprehensive Approach, the "Smart" Power, consists of the "Hard" power which is the military, the security and its activities and "Soft" Power, which is all the rest. The contemporary challenges and threats we face make necessary the increase of the "Hard" power dosage to our overall "Smart" power mix. In most of the cases, in our missions we do not provide security "per se". We provide Security Capacity Building so that the host Nations will be in position to assume the responsibility to take care of their own security.

I am confident that the future of Burma will be a brilliant one and that it will fulfil the expectations of your people.

Thank you!

Edited by: Captain (Hellenic Navy) Vasileios Loukovitis