



Chairman of the European Union Military Committee

Finnish National Defence Course Association

"The EU Global Strategy: A chance too valuable to miss"

Helsinki, 29 September 2016

Generals,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to be here today, in front of such a high level audience. Thank you for giving me this opportunity. I believe that my visit to Finland came in a very timely manner. Just three days ago, I was in Bratislava for the informal EU Defence Ministers meeting, where the main issue on the table was the implementation of the Global Strategy, in particular in the areas of security and defence. And I have to acknowledge that Finland has been very active on this issue. Actually your government provided its positions early on, contributing in a very constructive way to the ongoing discussions. Having said that, the Bratislava meeting was a very important one and I am sure that you would like to have some inside information on what really was its outcome. I take it as a "Yes".

As you understand, since the presentation of the Global Strategy by Madam Mogherini, expectations have been raised. The magnitude of the challenges the EU faces, call for immediate action. Our citizens want a stronger Europe, a Europe that will provide them with a level of security and defence as they have been enjoying until recently. The situation calls for a new Level of Ambition that will be pursued by all stakeholders with renewed enthusiasm. It calls for the European Union

to rebrand itself. The new Level of Ambition will lead us to define a new set of capabilities that we need in order to implement the Global Strategy. **Capabilities**, supported by the necessary **organizational restructure** and coupled with the always fundamental **political will**, this is what it is all about after all. I suppose you will not be shocked if I say that some of these challenges may pose a direct or indirect existential threat to the Union.

(On strategic priorities)

These new challenges are the ones that led us to revisit the 2003 European Security Strategy. The EU Global Strategy presented by the High Representative in late June, is adamant in describing the present. It has also set **three strategic priorities**: to **respond to external crises**, to **build the capacities of partners affected by crises and fragility** and to **protect Europe**. It has to be mentioned that these priorities come in no hierarchical order. I am sure that no one objects to these priorities. Especially the first two, "*respond to external crises*" and "*build the capacities of partners affected by crises and fragility*", they are not even new. The European Union has already been engaged in them.

(On Missions and Operations)

Today, we run **six military Missions and Operations**, executive and non-executive, land and maritime alike, building the capacities of our partners, assisting them in addressing the security challenges they face, tackling piracy and the migratory crisis. But the third one, to protect Europe, this is a new and a very ambitious one.

(On protection)

The question that immediately emerges is, "What do we mean by *protect*?" **What** will we protect? **How**, with **what** instruments will we

protect? A lot of eyebrows were raised, leading to numerous discussions, debates and articles about what has been perceived as opening the door to the creation of the European Army. This very issue has constantly been a point of misunderstanding.

Am I implying here the creation of a “European Army”? Definitely not. Let us be clear: there **will not** be a European Army. This is not foreseen in the Global Strategy, this is not on the horizon. The so called “*European Army*” is nothing but the sum of the Member States’ forces and capabilities delegated to the European Union to man its missions and operations and the Battlegroups. For the moment, we cannot use and exploit the sum of the military capabilities, because we do not have the proper Command and Control structure in place. The implementation of the Global Strategy presents with a unique opportunity to improve the performance of the EU military instrument, in general.

To achieve this, we have first to acknowledge the obvious. The European Union has to switch mode. Europe has to become a proactive force rather than a reactive one. Situational awareness and strategic foresight are of great importance for effective conflict prevention, crisis management or proper use of the military capabilities. Timely information and clear view of the developing situations should lead to timely action, if it is to be of any value. In addition to having a clear view and understanding of the developments, the European Union has also to have its rapid reaction forces available.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

(On Rapid Response Forces-BGs)

The 1st January 2017, almost 100 days from now, will mark the 10 years since the **Battlegroup** concept’s reaching Full Operational

Capability. This concept requires our revisiting, to examine how relevant it remains today. What is missing from the Battlegroups in order to be used as appropriate is the political will and the proper financial arrangements that would allow overcome national financial constraints. We need to find answers to these problems if we intend to use the Battlegroups. Regarding the Battlegroups themselves, we need to examine ways to transform them in a way that they will serve our contemporary needs and to adjust them accordingly. The training, evaluation and certification and deployability issues are among those that require our attention, in order for them to be able to effectively perform their rapid response role.

Going beyond the land domain, I believe that it is now time to expand the Battlegroup concept to the maritime domain as well. The creation of **maritime Battlegroups** will allow the European Union to promote its interests in the respective domain. Two out of three operations we currently run are in this domain. The EU Maritime Security Strategy and the protection of the Sea Lines of Communication are of great importance for the EU. Considering the level of EU dependence on the maritime domain, I would argue that this is a development that should have taken place a long time ago. My proposal is **not to duplicate** NATO Standing Naval Forces, but to create a rapid response maritime force with earmarked stand-by assets that will be available **if and when** the next crisis erupts.

Ladies and gentlemen,

(On PESCO)

I previously referred to the need for cooperation. Cooperation is difficult to quantify; it is its quality that can make a difference. On the other hand, it is hard not to admit that we **can** -and we **must**- do more. The challenges we collectively face can only be effectively addressed in

this particular manner: **collectively**. The Treaties have foreseen this need; the provisions are there allowing us to push forward structured defense cooperation, through flexible and open schemes **such as the Permanent Structured Cooperation**. Especially nowadays when the national militaries face severe budget restraints and Research and Development for future capabilities struggles to get adequate funding, structured cooperation is one of the ways to maintain already present capabilities and start building the future ones. I believe that the situation has matured enough and that we need to see this issue, in this light. **Permanent Structured Cooperation** could be the vehicle that will advance this much needed cooperation.

(On NATO)

When discussing about the protection of Europe, the first thing that comes to one's mind is the Alliance. **NATO** has been guaranteeing the territorial defense of Europe since its creation and will continue to do so in the future. Its importance and its relevance for today's Europe are unquestioned. Considering that 22 EU Member States are members of the Alliance as well, the calls for more compatibility between EU and NATO are more than justified. The Joint Declaration signed in Warsaw, lists a number of areas where cooperation is regarded as a strategic priority and calls for speedy implementation. Today, I can assure you that both organizations, in cooperation and coordination, they are working towards identifying specific actions that will result in the foreseen deepening of our relations.

At the same time, it is time for us to give a forthright answer to the question, "*Do we want Europe to be a **driver** or a **free-rider when it comes to its defence?***" Our transatlantic partner, the United States, a global actor as we are, has repeatedly called us to assume our fair share of the security burden. The United states have declared that a stronger

Europe is a stronger NATO. In this respect, strengthening NATO's European pillar is neither a threat nor a challenge to the Alliance.

NATO's Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg has been clear about this, three days ago in Bratislava. He said, and I quote: *"I also like to underline that there is no contradiction between strong European defence and a strong Atlantic cooperation within NATO. Actually, a strong Europe makes NATO stronger. So I welcome the efforts to strengthen European defence because that will contribute to our shared security"*.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, under these circumstances, taking our time is a luxury we cannot afford. We have to switch gears. We have to take action. There is no time for business as usual, if we are serious about preserving what has been achieved so far the last 60 years. We may be critical but a lot has been achieved. Things that may be part of our daily routine, things that are taken as a given. These things would seem inconceivable 60 years ago. These things are EU achievements. It is time to start building for the next 60 years. This is our moment in time, this is our chance. A chance **too valuable to miss**.

Thank you.