EU-Arab World Summit: Partners for Growth and Development

CEUMC Opening Remarks

Athens, 3 November 2016

Conference Theme: The European-Arab partnership shifting to a new paradigm

Speech Subject: The Role of EU (historical and the future) in bringing long-lasting peace into the Region

Your excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to be present today at this first EU-Arab World Summit. Allow me also to say that I am very happy and full of pride, because this important event takes place in Greece. A country that historically has always been the bridge between the two major economic and political blocks of the region, the European Union and the Arab world. Although, a Greek General I will not speak here as a Greek. I am the elected Chairman of the EU Military Committee and I will speak for Europe.

The EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy, presented by HR/VP in last June, highlights this very connection. It also underlines the obvious fact that Europe and the Arab world have the exact same interests. Both parties want a peaceful and prosperous future. They both want people, especially the young generation, to be able to study, to work, to produce, to create and to develop. And when referring to the young generation, one should have in mind that projections are that the population of Middle East will increase by 130% up to 2030.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The European Union is a responsible global actor. In this capacity, it acknowledges that complicated problems like those we meet in some,
troubled parts of the Arab World, they can only be addressed through sincere and intense political dialogue and through in-depth, bottom-up work with and within the societies. The European Union also acknowledges that military force or force in general should never be the instrument of first choice. The actions and initiatives undertaken by the European Union are consistent with the overarching positions, of making things better not worse and be part of the solution of the problem and not of the problem itself.

The European Union's engagement follows the established pattern that has become its trademark: an integrated and multilayered approach, with the intention to make full use of the wide array of instruments Europe has at its disposal. This is what we call Comprehensive Approach. The European Union aims to help in creating a region of peace and prosperity, to develop cooperative security, and to eliminate the root causes of conflict in order to prevent the outbreak of future ones.

Towards the Middle East, the European Union has for the last two decades articulated a formalized peacebuilding framework under which all its foreign policy actions fall. This framework is defined by the EU's umbrella policy program towards the region, the Barcelona Process of 1995, along with the European Neighborhood Program of 2003, as well as various actions specifically aimed at putting an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict. In doing so, EU understands and accepts that this is an exercise that demands patience and persistence, if it is to produce long lasting results and sustainable peace. To this end the European Parliament in 17 December 2014 passed a Resolution on recognition of Palestine statehood. In this Resolution, the European Parliament supports "in principle recognition of Palestinian statehood and the two state solution, and believes these should go hand in hand with the development of peace talks, which should be advanced".

But the European Union is more than just diplomacy and financial or humanitarian aid. Through its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) all these instruments are complemented with civilian and military missions and operations on the ground. Operating under clear mandates and backed by unanimous decisions of the European Council, they are tasked with assisting local authorities’ efforts to building capacities, reforming Security Sector, promoting the Rule of Law and in general to do everything in its
capacity to improve governance, social conditions, quality of life and in general to bring growth and hope.

Until now, more than 35 CSDP civilian and military missions and operations have been launched globally, eight of which in the Arab World. Six of them are still active. More specifically, these are:

- EUPOL-COPPS (Palestinian Territories, since Jan 2006), (EU Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support)
- EUBAM Rafah (Palestinian Territories, since Nov 2005), (EU Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah)
- EUBAM Libya (now located in Tunisia, since May 2013), (EU Border Assistance Mission in Libya)
- EUCAP Somalia (Somalia, since July 2012),(EU Mission on Regional Maritime Capacity Building in the Horn of Africa)
- EUTM Somalia (since April 2010) the only military training mission for Somali National Forces (EU Training Mission Somalia) and

Any single one of these missions and operations is unique, in the sense that they are all planned in order to be relevant to the specifics of the situation to be encountered. There is one common principle though, that governs them all: to bring the local authorities on board, to create local buy-in and ownership. An ownership that will guarantee commitment by the local authorities and therefore, sustainability of the results.

In Brussels we know that there is no universal recipe or any "one size fits all" solution that in a magic way will solve international problems. We know from our own in-house experience that through dialogue, open-minded spirit, identification of areas that bring peoples together and promotion of mutual interests, mankind makes progress. Within this framework, following the cessation of hostilities, a mandate by the UN Security Council and the agreement of the Member States, the European Union is able to provide Integrated Approach support to Arab World's
troubled areas, such as Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen, if invited by them. To this end the European Union will be there as an honest broker to facilitate this dialogue. The European Union Global Strategy is revealing about the Union’s intentions vis-à-vis the security in its neighborhood. It portrays its commitment for continuous engagement with the aim to create sustainable stability and security through assisting building local capacities, together with other international actors. Let me repeat this once more, the EU is not a security organization. The military and security portion of its activity is not exceeding an ambitious 10% of the whole EU Comprehensive Approach activity. We are not trying to secure the environment or the region. We are trying to shape and improve the political and social and financial landscape. We try to create an environment that will be characterized by good governance, the rule of law, transparency, justice, health, education and training and equal opportunities. This is exactly what CSDP missions and operations, civilian and military alike is all about.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I understand that this forum is focused more on growth and development. I want though, to remind us all, that in order to achieve these objectives we have to accept that a prerequisite for development is security and on the other side in the same time development will bring security in troubled areas. Giving people work and future is certainly better than sending them to fight and die. That’s the reason although myself being military, I whole heartedly support these policies.

Concluding my remarks, allow me to say that there is a duty and an obligation we carry on our shoulders. Europe and the Arab world not only share so much history and culture but we also have a future to share. A future of cooperation aiming at development and security. EU will not provide you rifles and machineguns or security enforcing troops. EU and its security and military sectors will be there to help and guarantee the re-build of the devastated countries' security sector reform in order to restore peace, prosperity and finally hope to the people, by giving them back the control of their lives.

Thank you.