Thank you Rafael for your kind words (Lt. General (Air Force) Rafael Sánchez Ortega).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to address such an audience. I want to thank the organisers of this event for providing me with such an opportunity! I consider this as an opportunity to directly involve with fellow officers that are making their way to the higher levels of the hierarchy but also with other civil servants and academics. I think this is important since the subject of our discussion today will mainly be the future of the European Defence.

A lot of discussions have recently been made on this subject. Especially during the last 15 months, since the presentation of the EU Global Strategy by the HR/VP, Madam Mogherini. But although the Global Strategy launched the debate on the "whys" and the "hows", only a few recalled that the idea of a more deepened European cooperation in the security and defence domains is as old as the European Union itself! The idea and the relevant provisions have always been there, waiting for the conditions to mature in order to surface.

The conditions were not mature in the 60s, when the European Defence Community project was ill-fated. They were no more mature in 1998, when the Saint Malo Declaration between France and United Kingdom was signed. They were certainly not any better in 2003, when the first European Security Strategy was presented. I remind you here of the opening statement of this Strategy:
"Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free. The violence of the first half of the 20th century has given way to a period of peace and stability unprecedented in European history."

This phrase depicts the world as it was conceived at the beginning of the 21st century, an optimistic view. This optimism and the euphoria around it resulted in defence budget cuts and great reductions in numbers of personnel and means. It also resulted in the loss of hard-earned defence capabilities, which were not considered necessary anymore.

I would argue that it took Europe two major crises in order for this optimism to disappear. The first one was the financial crisis, which put the European vision of sustainable prosperity under question, at least for a number of Member-States. The easy way for the governments to balance their national budgets and reduce the experienced deficits was to further reduce defence budgets. It led to further reductions in personnel strength and numbers of means. These reductions led to further loss of capabilities. This spiralling situation led to the 2% pledge, made at the NATO Summit in Wales, in order to stop and reverse this downgrade of NATO capabilities, balance somewhat the burden sharing between the United States and its European Allies and prevent the creation of a large technological gap within the Alliance. And I underline here that the 2% is a pledge to NATO, not to the European Union.

The second crisis is of security and defence nature. It does not matter whether we examine the East or the South. Neither has priority over the other. The challenge that Russia poses to the Eastern Member-States, the waves of migrants and refugees that storm our Southern European borders and the bloody terrorist attacks by jihadists in the heart of our cities, Spanish cities have been targeted more than once, they have a combined effect. European citizens came to consider their security and defence, or better, their sense of insecurity and their need to feel again defended, as their number one concern. National governments have the responsibility to provide security to their citizens; it is their duty to protect them.

The combination of these two crises presented governments with a problem difficult to solve. The provision of protection and the restoration of the security feeling of the citizens within the respective national borders, the
reverse of the downsizing of forces and the restoration of shrinking capabilities, the honouring of commitments made to Allied or EU missions and operations became more than a pressing priority. They became urgency. I suppose I do not need to stress to this audience how expensive defence and security are, nor how much time it takes to restore capabilities left to diminish or being lost. Neither time nor funds were available at the levels required, or, wished.

To find the solution to this troubling puzzle the European Union had to revert to its roots. To take a look back to its history and to consult the Treaties. Cooperation, more precisely, renewed and deepened cooperation surfaced as the solution. Indeed, as the only solution that made sense. Let us not forget that after all, cooperation is embedded in our DNA. It is the vehicle that brought us that far, with a Euro currency and a Schengen Treaty. The conditions have at last matured enough to make a defence cooperation, already envisaged in the Treaties but left dormant, not only possible but desired.

What I have said so far explain why so much has already been accomplished in the limited time that elapsed since the presentation of the Global Strategy. As it is usually said, and maybe it has become a cliché by now but yet it is true, more has been done in the last fifteen months than the last sixty years! It would not have been possible without the buy-in from the Member-States. The Global Strategy identified three strategic priorities for the Union, crisis management, capacity building for partners and the protection of Europe. It is up to the Member-States to advance these priorities. The Union and its institutions can only act as facilitators. The real power lies in the 28 capitals. And I want to thank all the people that worked restlessly and in a very productive way to make the progress we have made so far possible.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At a time when our principles and values, our way of life, our very civilisation as it has evolved since Renaissance, is under attack, we cannot remain passive. We have to react. It is both our right and our duty, as a global security provider. By "reaction", I by no means suggest to declare war against anybody. This is not the European way of defence! But I certainly do mean, “fight back”. Fight smart. In this fight, the European Union has to enter with its
full might, all its power. Its Soft and its Hard power, combined. Coordinated. Orchestrated. Well balanced to fit the purpose. Each and every unique purpose. It has to fight the reasons of this aggressiveness against us, not just defend us against the symptoms. It has to fight the reasons of this aggressiveness against us, not just defend us against the symptoms. It has to, and actually, it already does so, to go where the problem lays, where people are subjected to famine, starvation, humiliation, suppression, discrimination, violence, injustice, unemployment. Where people growth is expanding but their options for the future are diminishing. We need to bring them hope, help them build a future. There, in their homeland. If I was to speak with military terms, this is the centre of gravity of those who challenge us. This situation gives them power, due to the existence of great numbers of a population in despair. Denying this to the terrorists and to the radical manipulators will strip them of most of their power. The Global Strategy is about all these, among others.

The military instrument is not a new addition to CSDP although its contribution has been kept at low levels. Nevertheless, it is the most versatile and adaptable instrument in its toolbox. The European Union does have a military element. And I want to emphasise here, an element, not an Army. No global actor, a nation or a supranational organisation is complete if it does not have or if it neglects to develop its hard power, its military. Undoubtedly, the bulk of the European Union's Smart power stems mainly from its financial and diplomatic characteristics. Nevertheless it also places a great deal of value on developing its "Hard" power, as clearly portrayed in the Global Strategy. Here is where we, the military come to play and become relevant.

The European Union Military Committee, which I chair, is the highest military body set up within the Council. It is composed of the Chiefs of Defence of the Member States, who are on a daily basis represented by their permanent Military Representatives based in Brussels. The EUMC exercises military direction of all EU military activities and provides the Political and Security Committee with advice and recommendations on military matters. 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.

At the operational level, the military instrument has long proved its efficiency and its ability to serve the political goals set through the respective
mandates. As we speak, no less than six different Operations and Missions, both in land and at sea, in Africa as well as in Europe are ongoing. Almost 5,000 uniformed women and men are deployed. And this is the first time Europe has that many Operations and Missions ongoing simultaneously. This is a clear proof that the military is a powerful, as well as flexible tool in the hands of the policy-makers. In particular cases, as in the Horn of Africa, they are part of the wider European Union effort. These places where our men and women are deployed, are not exotic places for luxury vacations. And these people, our people do not enjoy the same level of security as we do. And sometimes, they pay the ultimate price for their being there. We should never forget this. From our side, we are trying to raise awareness in Brussels and make these sacrifices recognised at the appropriate level, as they should.

Spain is an active and dedicated supporter of this approach. Spanish troops participate in all EU CSDP Missions and Operations in an impressive display of commitment to the strengthening of the European Union's security and defence. The offer of valuable means, such as naval vessels and airplanes is also something that does not go unnoticed! We thank you for this.

I will offer you a brief summary of each ongoing Operation and Mission to better understand how the military can be used to restore stability and promote security.

The EU Naval Operation Atalanta is tackling piracy off the coast of Somalia and in the Indian Ocean since 2008. Since 2012 and until last spring, there had been no successful attempts. The alarming rate of piracy attempts during the last months proves that the piracy threat has anything but disappeared. Capability and intent are still present. The only thing preventing successful piracy attempts from occurring is denial of opportunity. This is what we are trying to achieve until a credible local anti-piracy force allows us to terminate the Operation.

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.
At the beginning of April 2014 the EU launched its operation EUFOR RCA in the Central African Republic upon request from the United Nations. Today, EUTM RCA is a Training Mission that followed and succeeded a successful Advisory one.

In Mali, the EU is assisting the Malian authorities in building up their own professional military capabilities. About 550 military personnel from 22 EU Member States and four partners 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.

Since June 2015, 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 six EU Member States contribute to this operation. Operationally, the EUNAVFOR MED assets conduct boarding, search, seizure and diversion, on the high seas, of vessels suspected of being used for human smuggling or trafficking. In 25 July 2017, the Council extended Operation Sophia’s mandate until the end of 2018, amending it to:

- Set up a monitoring mechanism of trainees to ensure the long-term efficiency of the training of the Libyan Coastguard;
- Conduct new surveillance activities and gather information on illegal trafficking of oil exports from Libya;
- Enhance the possibilities for sharing information on human trafficking with member states' law enforcement agencies, FRONTEX and EUROPOL.

Last, but certainly not least, let me also mention the EU's military engagement in Europe, in the Balkans, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the EU-led Operation ALTHEA has guaranteed a safe and secure environment for the population for more than 12 years now. The main objectives of Operation ALTHEA are:

- To provide capacity-building and training to the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
• To support BiH efforts to maintain the **safe and secure environment** in BiH;
• To provide support to the overall **EU comprehensive strategy** for BiH.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is the way the military contributes to the protection of Europe. The troops participating in the aforementioned missions and operations, together with their civilian counterparts, they provide something that is rarely outspoken or admitted; "**forward defence**". And as this term may make some people uneasy or uncomfortable, I will elaborate on this right away, explaining myself. The European Union understands that internal and external security are more intertwined than ever. Security at home entails a parallel interest in peace and stability in our neighbouring and surrounding regions. As an actor with global interests, the EU has assumed its responsibilities, promoting state and societal resilience. The three EU-led military training missions are an integral part of the European Union's Integrated Approach. An approach that brings together all the instruments available in the European toolbox, to perform an in-depth work, to tackle the root causes of instability, to build local capacities and to reform institutions.

Our work there aims at setting the ground for **sustainable, locally-owned security** which is a prerequisite for development efforts to flourish. And I put emphasis on the sustainability and the local ownership elements of this security. The troops participating in these EU missions and operations do not provide security "**per se**" to the respective host nations but they are rather "**founding**" security. They are there to train and assist local Armed Forces build their own capacity to provide security in a responsible and professional way, adhering to the rule of law and to international conventions.

By this they set the foundations for the gradual building of a development-permitting environment. Doing this, they provide "**forward defence**" for the European peoples, some thousand kilometres away from the physical European borders. They expand the safe and secure environment we enjoy and they become our first line of "**proactive defence**", that will prevent the local population from leaving home. And this will be by their own will, not
because of fences or walls that will stop them. It will be because they will have every good reason to stay in their country. Ultimately, they help build a "security belt" where the "arc of instability" is now. As you understand, with our Integrated Approach, we try to create conditions for growth, development and hope. We do not impose restrictive measures; we build a better future. This is the reason I am proud of it.

This work we perform, this modest 10% (this is my personal feeling) we contribute to the overall European Union effort produces results of exponential magnitude. I consider the military engagement to serve as a kind of "force multiplier" in this occasion! Am I proud of it? Definitely. Am I satisfied? No. If I were, I would be a show-stopper for evolution, for progress! No, we can do better. We do not lack the means, the European Union Member-States summon a combined army of 1.5 million. They are supported by large numbers of sophisticated, state-of-the-art equipment. Nevertheless, we struggle to secure a frigate for Operation Atalanta or a platoon for Althea. Because the problem has never been the scarcity of military assets. The problem lays on the lack of a Command structure that will take control of whatever forces the Member-States decide to provide and make the best use of them. The effort therefore is not about any kind of "European Army". It is about first, better organising what we already have.

This is, unfortunately, the well-identified problem. The political reluctance, the absence of genuine political will. Let us examine how we perform on terms of defence investment output. Defence budgets are of course a national issue, and a very sensitive one. Every year Member-States spend almost 200 billion Euros for their defence, which adds to the European defence. This figure is more than 3 times what the Russians spend. When examining though what we actually get as output of these 200 billion Euros' investment, then things change. It has been documented by the concerned European agencies that this output is low. Is this acceptable in times of scarcity of funds and of surplus of insecurity? I don't think so. How did we come to this situation? Because the national interest, in its very narrow and negative meaning did not allow true cooperation with other like-minded nations. It is time to turn the page and abolish old habits and the "business-as-usual" notion. It is time for a change in mind-set.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Here I will refer to a famous Spanish writer, Miguel de Cervantes, who said:

"To be prepared is half the victory".

This is what the European Union does at this moment, getting prepared.

A new set of acronyms have entered into our daily routine. PESCO, CARD, EDF, to name but the most common. In Brussels, we love to create acronyms, I suppose that they add a layer of mystery to what we do! Yet, the substance behind these acronyms should not be a mystery. They are our new tools designed to advance the common effort of the willing Member-States towards a deepened European Defence. They are tools that will get into action, hopefully, by the beginning of the next year at the latest! They will give flesh to the bones of a stronger Europe.

I will give you a broad overview of these projects. Please, have in mind that not all details have been finalised yet and that discussions are still ongoing at a high political level. So considering that the general idea is to coordinate the Member-States efforts in the defence domain and increase the cooperation among them, the first step is to bring these Member-States together and identify areas of potential cooperation. This is the role of the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence, or CARD. A trial run of this review will be run this autumn. And this is on a voluntary basis.

The results deriving from CARD will feed into the Permanent Structured Cooperation, or PESCO. Here, willing Member-States will make binding commitments between them to engage into jointly developing and deploying military capabilities. Here is the tricky part, the binding commitments. How does one persuade sovereign countries to make binding commitments to each other in this domain which is considered as the core of a nation's sovereignty?

Here is where the European Defence Fund or EDF comes into play. I will not give you too many numbers here. I think it is enough to say that 90 million Euros until 2019 and 500 million Euros every year after that will be granted for collaborative research in innovative defence technologies and products. Then come development and acquisition. A total of 500 million Euros will be
allocated for 2019 and 2020 and 1 billion Euros per year after 2020 will be allocated to collaborative projects of joint development and acquisition of defence equipment and technology. These funds will be added to the ones that the concerned nations will put into these programs.

After all, political will seems to be present at this time and these projects will be launched soon. But we have already accomplished some of the Global Strategy's objectives. The creation of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability, or MPCC, another acronym, is the first concrete deliverable of the EU Global Strategy and a proof of what can be achieved if everybody is committed! We have done this, and it is no duplication whatsoever with NATO or anybody else. The first ever European military planning capability, having already assumed control over the three EU training missions, exists in Brussels! But, allow me to say, it is not enough. There is no better example of what the absence, or the retraction, of political will can do than the case of the Battlegroups. The "crown-jewel-to-be" of the European Union's Hard power, the tangible proof of its commitment to engage in crisis management. We all know that the Battlegroups were never given a chance to prove their value. The political will and enthusiasm that prevailed at the time of their establishment, fade away when the cost of their deployment was presented. And I am only referring here to the financial cost. The political cost of any potential casualties is also very important.

This is what I meant earlier in my remarks, when I referred to the fulfilment of critical conditions. Political will is the ultimate critical condition that needs to be fulfilled throughout the lifetime of projects of this magnitude. The Battlegroups experience should serve us a lesson-learned on how not to proceed with ambitious projects, unless we wrap them up with all the necessary tools and provisions that will ensure that in the end, they will operate as envisaged and that they will fulfil their purpose. If this is not the case, the Union's credibility will be at stake.

I do not want to sound pessimistic, I really am not. On the contrary, I am very optimistic, witnessing the speed in which all work-strands progress! It makes me proud to be the Chairman of the Military Committee in the time of the building up of the European Union as a complete global actor. I am proud
of the contribution of this Committee to this goal. I also feel the responsibility to warn against any possible challenges this project may face.

And since I already quoted a Spanish writer, let me offer you as a bonus for your patience, a phrase that has been saved for future generations by an ancient Greek historian, Thucydides. This phrase describes the ancient Athenians, as they were perceived by their enemies. The phrase goes:

"[They are] bold beyond their strength,

adventurous above their own reason,

and in danger [they] hope still the best."

This phrase should serve as the guiding light through your entire career. I invite you to think this over.

I would like to wish you all, every success in your career and in your personal endeavours. And I also wish that your careers and your professional achievements will lead to "A stronger Europe". Because we deserve it.

Thank you.

Edited by Captain (Hellenic Navy) Vasileios Loukovitis