Madam Chair,

Distinguished Parliamentarians,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

Before I proceed with my remarks, allow me to sincerely offer you and your families my best wishes for a more prosperous, happy and successful New Year. May all your endeavours are met with success and appreciation.

It is an honour for me to appear here today, in front of the elected representatives of citizens of the European Union. And, it is also a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to inform you about the EU Military Committee’s contribution to the evolving CSDP Common Security and Defence Policy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Two years ago, when I first appeared in front of this Committee, I concluded my remarks warning that "as we speak, in many regions of the world, instability is raising and we must remain vigilant and united, notwithstanding our diversities." In these two years that passed by, the world has not become a safer or more stable place. Any progress achieved in one field, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, mostly known as the Iran nuclear deal comes easily to my mind, has been counter-balanced by the deterioration witnessed in others, namely, North Korea or Yemen.
At the same time, the number of the ongoing CSDP military missions and operations remains unchanged. There are two ways to interpret this fact:

- The first one, the pessimistic, is that we have not succeeded in our objectives, and therefore we remain in these countries or areas;

- The second one, the optimistic, is that European Union is regarded as a trusted and credible security provider and therefore, is requested to provide assistance, despite the inherent limitations it faces. Both aspects are of course correct.

I will return to the issue of our missions and operations later in my presentation.

In the Council Decision of 22 January 2001 setting up the Military Committee of the European Union (2001/79/CFSP), the EU Military Committee Mission is stated as follows: "The EUMC is responsible for providing the PSC with military advice and recommendations on all military matters within the EU. It exercises military direction of all military activities within the EU framework." In line with this mission, the Military Committee has been and still is actively engaged and contributes within the framework of its tasks and responsibilities to the evolving Common Security and Defence Policy, at all levels.

At the strategic level, the EU Military Committee was engaged in the drafting of the EU Global Strategy early on. Our inputs were timely provided to the drafting team and were to a great extent adopted, acknowledging our position that argued that security and defence had become major concerns of the European people and that this fact should be reflected in and addressed by this overarching European strategic document. We now know that Security and Defence are at the heart of the Global Strategy and that they influence all the consequent documents and decisions.

Our engagement at this strategic level continued, both at the conceptual and the implementation phase. Building on our contribution to the Global Strategy, the EU Military Committee continued to provide concrete recommendations and advices to the drafters of the Implementation Plan on Security and Defence, based on the vast military expertise this body has. The Committee was also engaged, although at different level, to the drawing of the deliverables of the Implementation Plan, namely, the Permanent Structured
Cooperation (PESCO), the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and the European Defence Fund (EDF).

This engagement in the conceptual phase does not end our contribution. To the opposite, the Military Committee considers its formal engagement in the operational phase to be very important. The Member-States' position, equally expressed through the EU Military Committee, is for their extensive participation at all stages, levels and phases of the evolution of CSDP. The EU Military Committee holds very extensive military expertise, which can and should be transformed into solid military advice that will be incorporated into the decision making process. This has been taken into account and is reflected in the documents establishing the procedures on which these tools will operate. In all the documents that have been produced until now, final or draft, a role has been foreseen for the Military Committee, recognising the added value of its contribution.

➢ For PESCO projects, November 2017 Council Conclusions state that "the Military Committee will provide military advice (on individual projects)" (Article 5 para. 1) and "will provide the Political and Security Committee with military advice and recommendations regarding to the annual PESCO assessment process" (Article 5 para.3).

➢ An equally substantial role is expected to be reserved for the Military Committee in the procedures that will be established for the European Defence Fund and the European Defence Industry Development Programme (EDIDP).

To this end, the Military Committee cooperates with all other relevant stakeholders in order to identify the optimal way, in terms of time and form of communicating its views, to offer its input in the EDF/EDIDP process.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At this point, it needs to be underlined that the EU Military Committee has always been formally engaged in the evolving of CSDP at the strategic level, even before the surface of this new work strands. The EU Military Committee significantly contributes to focus on developing military capabilities for sustaining and enhancing CSDP and meeting new requirements of CSDP. This is performed in the form of producing the Requirements Catalogue and providing
Strand "A" and "D" military capability requirements that feed into the Capability Development Plan (CDP) of the European Defence Agency (EDA). In line with the 2016 Council Conclusions and the new Level of Ambition determined by the Council of the European Union, the Military Committee adapted the related Requirements Catalogue (RC) Illustrative Scenarios (IS). This led to the review of the Requirements Catalogue that was concluded in November 2017. The Requirements Catalogue is one of the building blocks, together with the Force Catalogue, for the Military Committee's input to the Capability Development Plan. The linkages of the Capability Development Plan with PESCO and EDF are obvious and I do not think I need to elaborate.

All the aforementioned work strands and ways to contribute to the evolving CSDP are with a view to the future. The Military Committee's contribution though also focuses to the present. The Military Committee seeks ways to improve the performance, effectiveness and efficiency of the EU military element. The latter, although limited in size, is widely regarded as an important element and contributor to the EU's Integrated Approach to external crises and conflicts. Therefore, we want to maximise its contribution.

To that end, I consider the establishment of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability as the best example and the most tangible proof of the EU Military Committee's contribution to the evolution of CSDP and to the improvement of the military element's performance. The Military Committee has been very vocal and insistent on highlighting the gap in the military Chain of Command. A gap that hampered the effectiveness of the military leadership on the ground. The recommendations made were adopted and implemented, although the establishment of an Operational Headquarters for all EU military Missions and Operations, which would be from a military point of view the optimal situation, has not yet become a reality. Hopefully this will be one of the recommendations of the review that is foreseen to take place before the end of this year.

At the tactical level, the Military Committee directs all military activities within the EU framework, in particular the planning and execution of military missions and operations under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). I will briefly present you the current state of the six ongoing EU Missions and Operations.

➢ The EU Training Mission in SOMALIA (EUTM Somalia) was launched in 2010. The Mission operates with a three pillar
approach; **training, advising, and mentoring.** The Mission's Training Team supports the Somali military authorities in the design, development and delivery of general and specialist training, particularly through courses conducted at the Jazeera Training Camp (JTC), located in Mogadishu. Until now, EUTM Somalia has contributed to the training of approximately 5,500 Somali soldiers. The Mission's Advisory Team provides strategic advice to the Somali authorities within the security institutions, primarily the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff. Currently, the Mission faces multiple challenges, the main being:

- The recent efforts of the Somali Government to strengthen the National Security Architecture, and
- The recent military operations conducted by the Somali National Army (SNA) (with the support of other stakeholders such as the African Union Mission in Somalia-AMISOM) against armed groups and terrorist organisations in the country.

These challenges will provide an opportunity to EUTM Somalia to reinforce its effort on the support of SNA’s Training and on the Advice on Security and Defence matters. There are also a number of concerns. Such as:

- The security situation in Mogadishu and the Al Shabaab threat;
- The AMISOM withdrawal and
- The Political instability in Somalia

➢ The EU Training Mission in **Mali** was launched in 2013. Its training pillar is a success. At this moment, the Malian Armed Forces are to a great extent overstretched due to the current security situation. MINUSMA continues to play an essential role in building sustainable stability. The overall evaluation of the Advisory pillar is also positive. One additional objective has been recently given to the Mission, to support to the G5 Sahel process, within the activities of EUTM Mali in support of the Malian Armed Forces.
Forces, by contributing to enhancing coordination and interoperability within the G5 Sahel national Armed Forces. The main challenges EUTM Mali faces are:

- The regional approach of the European Union in the wider region in conjunction with the training and mentoring of future Malian Armed Forces;
- The flexibility needed to meet future Malian Armed Forces short term needs through the delivery of collective training to prepare forces for operations, and
- The gradual progress in the Malian Security Sector Reform.

Our concerns include:

- The surge in Islamist radicalisation and recruitment in the North and Centre of the country;
- The harassing attacks on international units along the MSR between BAMAKO and GAO;
- Current political uncertainty in the build up to the elections;
- Logistical support to courses.

In the **CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC**, the Advisory Mission that was deployed at the time of my previous appearance before you has been transformed to a Training Mission. Here again, the Missions faces a number of challenges, the most important being:

- The training of additional personnel as part of the Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration and National Renovation (DDRR) process, and
- The collective training and future deployment of FACA units in the country.
Our concerns include:

- The political instability, and
- The threat of the Armed Groups that are not involved in the DDRR process.

There is much more to be done in RCA but I have no doubts that through cooperation, amongst the various stakeholders within and outside the European Union, it will become a success story.

I will now turn from Missions to Executive Operations.

➢ In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Operation "Althea" is delivering capacity building and training while at the same time maintaining the safe and secure environment in the country since 2004. The main effort of the Operation is the "Capacity Building" of the Armed Forces of the country. In this regard, significant progress has been made in developing a better link between the Mission and the NATO Headquarters in Sarajevo, with which we share the task of building the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ultra-nationalist and extremist organizations as well as some radicalized segments of the population remain a threat to the stability of the country and therefore to its internal security. The greatest vigilance is thus recommended. Regarding the rest of the challenges our Operation faces, I take special note of the following:

- The ability of Op Althea to respond to threats to the Safe and Secure Environment is hampered by two major factors: Situational Awareness (a lack of information gathering capabilities) and the limited in-theatre forces (only a reduced battalion) especially considering that the limited Reserve Forces are home based (apart from the KFOR Tactical Reserve);

My concerns include:
- The political uncertainly in the country related to the general elections (October 2018), and

- The progress of the accession to the EU which has slowed down in 2017.

Europe has historically been heavily dependent on the sea. The same holds truth for the European Union. The maritime domain contains the bloodlines of our economy. In this context, it comes as no surprise that two out of three Operations launched by the European Union are maritime ones.

In the Southern Central Mediterranean we have deployed EUNAVFORMED, Operation "Sophia", since summer 2015, in order to undertake systematic efforts to contribute to disrupt the human trafficking and to reduce the loss of lives in the Mediterranean. Countering the smuggling and trafficking of migrants is more than just one dimension of the effort to put an end to the human tragedy that we see unfolding in the Mediterranean Sea; it is also an important contribution to restoring stability in the region. The Operation's mandate has been amended (July 2017) to include the following tasks:

- To set up a monitoring mechanism of trainees to ensure the long-term efficiency of the training of the Libyan Coastguard;

- To conduct new surveillance activities and gather information on illegal trafficking of oil exports from Libya in accordance with UNSCR 2146 (2014) and 2362 (2017), and

- To enhance the possibilities for sharing information on human trafficking with Member States' law enforcement agencies, FRONTEX and EUROPOL.

As main challenges, I consider the following;
• The enhanced monitoring of the Libyan Coast Guard, and

• A potential mandate to operate within territorial waters.

➢ Last, but not least, we have EUNAVFOR "ATALANTA", the EU's first naval engagement which was launched in December 2008. EUNAVFOR "Atalanta", in cooperation with other actors in the region, succeeded in zeroing successful piracy attempts and in protecting the World Food Programme shipping, enabling the safe delivery of over 1 million tons of food to Somali ports. That record ended last March. Since then, piracy off the coast of Somalia has resurfaced. This confirms what I argued in front of this Committee two years ago: "Neither the capabilities nor the intent to launch piracy attacks have yet been eliminated. All available analyses converge to the conclusion that the moment the international community withdraws the naval units that provide security in the area, the piracy threat will resurface". Not everything is grey though. EUNAVFOR "Atalanta" has established strong working relations with other international actors such as the United Nations and its different agencies, NATO, the US-led Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), China, India, Japan, South Korea and other nations engaged in the fight against piracy. Of equal importance are the working relations it has established with the shipping industry. EUNAVFOR "Atalanta" also has close cooperation with EUCAP NESTOR, in supporting Somali Capacity Building in the maritime domain, and with other EU bodies and instruments. Among the challenges faced, I consider the following as the main ones:

• The impact of the Yemen conflict in the operation’s activities, and

• Providing support to EU bodies and missions in Somalia, in particular on security emergency evacuation from Mogadishu in case of emergency.

Regarding concerns, the political situation and the force flow rank very high.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

What I have reported to you up to now do not conclude the EU Military Committee contribution to the evolvement of CSDP. With a view towards the future and feeling the responsibility to present new ideas and fuel the discussion on getting CSDP to the next level, my Cabinet has produced during the two years of my Chairmanship a large number of Food-for-Thought papers, non-papers or letters. These papers put forward new initiatives and ideas that were considered worthy of examination or examined with a fresh look ones that have been re-examined in the past, in the belief that the conditions are now mature and they call for their revisiting. The issues addressed in these papers are very diverse and cover almost any domain, ranging from the evolution of the Battlegroups to Gender Balance and from Military Advanced Training to the Financial Compensation for Force Contribution. In doing so the Military Committee has displayed initiative, dynamism and proactiveness. The results produced in each of these initiatives undertaken vary, some of the initiatives were met with enthusiasm, others need more time and others are ahead of their time. What I keep is that the Military Committee was always keen to examine and discuss every proposal or idea with a positive view, without prejudice, and that the discussions we had were always frank, fruitful and constructive.

One of the initiatives that was warmly accepted was about the Advanced Modular Training, an initiative that is designed to gradually build a European military identity. Member-States welcomed this idea and as a result ESDC has organised and runs the courses of the programme for the first year.

On the other side, one of these initiatives that regrettably did not go forward was related to the financing of the Battlegroups. The Battlegroups have never been deployed and this will very likely continue to be the case for the foreseeable future. The reasons for this unfortunate conclusion of a tool that holds a great potential are two-fold:

- First, the experienced shortage of political will, and
- Second, the underfunding by the Athena mechanism.

The recent overview of the latter, did not meet the expectations of us who wanted to see tangible support for the only rapid response tool Europe actually possess. The process failed to deliver real changes; it introduced only
marginal improvements. I would call them, cosmetic. If this is indicative of the European Union's approach towards its Hard power, I have to say in total honesty that the latter will remain under-developed.

In a connected and globalised world, characterised by the speed news are travelling, the existence of "fake" news and the impact the right message has, it is paramount for the European Union to be active in strategic communications. This is an "all hands" effort. In my capacity as the Chairman of the EU Military Committee and the highest ranking military officer in the Union, I spared no opportunity to communicate with other officers, civilians, students and the Academia, to relay the agreed strategic messages. The message that the European Union is a credible, strong, capable, honest and predictable security provider. That the European Union decided to do more to protect its citizens and territory. And that this strengthening should not be regarded as a threat against anyone, since the Union also stands by its allies and partners, honouring its agreements and deals. And that just because of this intention to honour the responsibilities and commitments undertaken, the Member-States will do more for their security and defence. Doing so, I upgraded the role of the Military Committee as a Public Diplomacy and a StratComm tool. This upgrade is also reflected at the use of the Military Committee as an entry point to discussions with Myanmar, Pakistan and Vietnam. This effort, coupled with the participation of officers in uniform in various ESDC courses, workshops, seminars or other events, increased the recognition of the military element of the EU.

It is well-known to the Members of this Committee that European Union usually face Force Generation problems. This is something that also tantalises United Nations and NATO. This is an additional reason for the European Union to seek for partners that will contribute to its CSDP military Missions and Operations. I understand that having partners in our Missions and Operations does not only address practical, staffing or capability shortfalls. It also enhances the image we show the world, as described in the Global Strategy and the Integrated Approach of the European Union. It is an image of several actors joining forces for a shared goal.

To this end, I used the good personal relations I established during my tenure as Greek Chief of Defence to persuade Egypt, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Jordan leaderships to offer their participation to our military Missions.
The European Union and NATO jointly decided to strengthen their cooperation, as stated in the July's 2017 Joint Declaration. The EU Military Committee contributes to this end, by holding EU-NATO formal and informal meetings at the appropriate level. At the same time, the Chairmen of the respective Military Committees are invited to participate in the other organisation's meetings at Chief of Defence level.

Another personal view of mine which I tried to implement is regarding the synthesis of my Cabinet. My staff supports me in my capacity as the Chairman of a body representing the Member-States, therefore I consider it to be right that as many Member-States as possible contribute to my Staff, representing their respective Armed Forces. Today, I am proud that my Cabinet consists of officers from 14 different Member-States.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I will stop here, and I welcome your questions. Before I do so, I would like to take the opportunity and state, for the record, that in the last two years, ground-breaking developments have taken place in the Security and Defence domains in the European Union. I am proud that the Military Committee, my staff and myself have played a modest but, allow me to say, important role to fulfilling the vision of the Global Strategy and making Europe stronger. But for this vision to be materialised, it demands patience, commitment, consistency. Therefore, in the ten months that I still have in front of me as Chairman of the EU Military Committee, I will continue devoting all my energy to this end, representing the Member-States and their priorities.

Thank you.

Edited by Captain (Hellenic Navy) Vasileios Loukovitis