



Chairman of the European Union Military Committee

General Mikhail Kostarakos

CEUMC Opening Remarks at the MILEX 2018 DV Day

Rota, 23 April 2018

Your Excellency Madame Minister (*Mrs María Dolores de Cospedal García, Spanish Minister of Defence*)

General Alejandro (*Spanish CHOD, Army General Fernando Alejandro Martínez*)

Excellencies,

Chiefs of Defence,

Admirals, Generals,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have gathered today in beautiful Rota, to participate in the Distinguished Visitors Day of exercise MILEX 18. At this point, I want to thank Spain for decisively stepping in and taking over the planning and execution of this exercise, at a point where serious thoughts about cancelling it were voiced. Spain provided the Operation HQ, the Force HQ and the majority of the assets that made MILEX 18 possible, at a time when its cancellation seemed inevitable. Madame Minister, General Alejandro, you saved the day! This extensive involvement demonstrates the firm Spanish commitment to CSDP and to the European defence as a whole.

Since the first MILEX of 2005, the context of this exercise has evolved considerably. Year after year, they became more complex and more demanding; corresponding to the evolution of the challenges the European Union face. We must keep in mind that the European military should take advantage of every common training and education opportunity in a fast-changing world that poses threats and challenges to the European citizens. Against this background, military exercises in the European framework take the utmost relevance.

This year, we have another interesting aspect of MILEX 2018. The already in place National and NATO certifications of the OHQ ROTA are being validated in the EU environment, given that the Spanish Operation HQ is offered to the EU for the full spectrum of CSDP operations.

The Spanish example should make us reflect a little more on the advantages of having a common certification process for EU military structures, be them Battlegroups or OHQs. The European Union has showed an agreed set of standards, the same way they exist in NATO. There are several ideas on how this might be accomplished without adding bureaucratic layers or duplicating NATO, but I believe that the implementation of this idea would indeed complement NATO.

On a different issue, I cannot but highlight the fact that MILEX 2018 is the first one of these exercises whose scenario unfolds in the maritime domain. A domain which is more than important to the European Union; it is crucial. The European dependence on the Sea Line of Communications is very well known to this audience. Ranging from migratory flows to pirate attacks to energy insecurity, the maritime-related challenges demand more than our vigilance. They demand our active engagement. An engagement that needs to be swift, decisive and credible. These characteristics can be identified in the Battlegroup concept. I clearly see merit in expanding this concept to the maritime domain, in line with the EU Global Strategy (the term "*maritime*" appears 11 times in the Global Strategy, underlining the significance of this domain to the European Union) and the EU Maritime Security Strategy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am confident that what we are about to see in a while will impress us. I am sure that all participants in MILEX 2018, have given their best to ensure a successful conclusion of the exercise, fulfilling its objectives and gaining valuable experience in the process. These sailors, airmen and soldiers exercised in this EU crisis management scenario, contributing to the realisation of the vision that was laid out in the EU Global Strategy. I argue that they deserve more than just a "*thank you*". They deserve our continuous support to make their job easier and through this to make Europe stronger. I believe we deserve this.

Thank you.