Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I begin with my remarks, I would like to thank the organisers of this event for offering me the opportunity to address this high-level audience. I also want to publicly congratulate them for their efforts to raise public awareness and stimulate the dialogue on how the European Union is engaged in making our lives more secure.

Because security has become one of the main concerns of the European citizen. This is particularly the case in the countries hit by terrorism but also in the countries that form the eastern and southern external borders of the European Union. People demand from their governments to take action and restore security.

I do not think that this audience needs any explanations about why and how internal and external security are intertwined. What happens in faraway places, as distant as Afghanistan or as close as Syria, it creates an impact on our societies. Coping with the immediate effects and mitigating the implications, this is only handling the symptoms of the problem, it does not solve it. This will be an endless and futile effort as long as the root causes that create them remain unchecked. And the root causes lie at these distant places. This is where the true effort has to be focused on. Only by strengthening the external security of the European Union will we manage to restore internal security as well. But this is an effort no single nation can take-on on its own. To do that
effectively, in a coordinated and cooperative European way, a plan was needed, a strategy that would take into consideration the contemporary geopolitical environment, offer a vision for the future, define strategic priorities and describe a line of actions.

The **European Union Global Strategy**, presented by HR/VP, Madam Mogherini in June 2016, offered all that. It came in a very timely manner in more ways than could be imagined:

- First, it was presented only one week after the **BREXIT**, counterbalancing its negative impact;
- Second, it came roughly two weeks before the **NATO Warsaw Summit**, where the Joint EU-NATO Declaration was signed;
- Third, it came about five months before the **US presidential elections**, timely placing the Union in a position to discuss global issues with the new US administration.

What marks a striking difference between the Global Strategy and the one it replaced is the perception of the world and the way the EU should engage with it. The optimistic view of the European Security Strategy of 2003, "*Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free*"
gave way to a grimmer but yet more realistic one:

> “The purpose, even existence, of our Union is being questioned. [...] Our wider region has become more unstable and more insecure.”

I think that **two** particular things in the Global Strategy do stand out:

- The **first** is the frank acknowledgement of the value of the **Hard Power**. The power that mainly derives from the military capabilities a nation possesses. In the modern world, it also includes the punitive use of the financial instrument but that is another story, since that option is already being used. The acknowledgement of the value of the Hard Power gets additional importance coming from one of the greatest **Soft Powers** in history. This is irrefutable, taking into consideration the might of
the European Union in the diplomatic, financial, and cultural domains. Despite this might, the total **Smart Power** of the Union was incomplete, due to the imbalanced development of its two elements, the Soft and the Hard. A balance **had** to be reached, and as a consequence, Security and Defence became focal points of this new EU Strategy.

- The **second** is the value it places on partnering, especially with international organisations such as the United Nations but most importantly, with NATO.

The Global Strategy introduced a new approach to conflicts and crises for the Union. This approach is the EU's principal concept and it is called "**Integrated Approach**". Through this concept, each and every instrument in the EU's disposal is used in a balanced, coherent and coordinated way. As a result the Union becomes more **preventive, responsive** and **decisive**. It also becomes **more efficient** as no tool or capacity stays unexploited. The full breadth of EU's Smart Power is called to serve the Union's vital interests. This also extends to the military instrument.

The actions undertaken by the EU can be roughly listed in two categories: those with an **internal aspect** and those with an **external one**. The internal-external security nexus is present here as well.

Beginning from the undertaken actions with an **external** aspect, one particular stands out. I refer to the concrete actions that have been undertaken to deepen cooperation with NATO. The initial 42 actions commonly agreed for the implementation of the **Joint EU-NATO Declaration** in all seven areas of cooperation have been complemented with an additional batch of 34, now bringing their total number to 76. At the same time, the area they cover has also been extended, now including new topics such as **counter-terrorism, military mobility and women, peace and security**. Without solving the political problems that have been blocking cooperation so far, focus has been given to **real-life cooperation**.

Then, we also have the six **CSDP Missions and Operations** which are active as we speak. Missions and Operations deployed where the heart of the problem lies, in the heart of Africa, in the waters of the Indian Ocean and the
Mediterranean Sea, even in Europe. For the record, the three Operations that we run, and which have an executive mandate, are EUFOR Althea (Bosnia-Herzegovina), EUNAVFOR Atalanta and EUNAVFORMED Sophia. The three respective Missions, which are of training nature, are EUTM Mali, EUTM RCA and EUTM Somalia. Through these Missions and Operations we provide Capacity Building, keep Sea Lines of Communication open, secure the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Somalia through the World Food Programme (WFP), combat piracy and human smuggling. We provide a Safe and Secure Environment in the countries where we are deployed in order to create the necessary security environment that will allow investments and development to come. At the same time we train the local Law Enforcement and military forces, so that they become capable of taking over these responsibilities for their people. Summarizing, we strengthen European external security by extending our Safe And Secure Environment and by creating a security zone some thousand kilometers away from our physical external borders southbound, acting us the first line of engagement with the challenges EU faces.

Turning to the actions with an internal aspect, the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and the European Defence Fund (EDF) are the new buzz-words in all 28 capitals. They are some of the deliverables of the Implementation Plan of the EU Global Strategy, in the Security and Defence Domains. Their objective is pretty straightforward: to put the European Union defence house in order. This is paramount in order for the European Union to become a credible security provider and to take on its fair share of burden of its own security.

Permanent Structured Cooperation has always been an option, since its conception can be traced back to the Lisbon Treaty. Under this provision those Member States whose military capabilities fulfill higher criteria could establish permanent structured cooperation within the Union framework, after making more binding commitments to one another with a view to the most demanding missions. This provision remained idle until now. In December 2017, PESCO was formally established. The European Council has already established an initial list of 17 PESCO projects that range from capability development to the operational dimension. It goes without saying that whatever capabilities will be
developed through these collaborative programs, they will at the same time benefit NATO, since all nations possess a single set of forces.

What is equally true is that they possess a single set of taxpayers. The 28 EU Member-States already spend €200 billion, which is second only to the US (in the range of €600 billion). For comparison reasons, Russia reduced its defence expenditures by 20% last year (now lies in the range of €40 billion). Looking further east, the respective figure for China is €175 billion. Therefore, spending more for security, as agreed in Wales in 2014 is only half the answer. What is needed more than just increased spending is wise spending. Any figure between €25-100 billion is lost on an annual base due to the lack of cooperation and of inefficiencies in the EU defence market. 28 national Armed Forces operate 19 different types of combat aircraft compared to just 4 in service with the US Air Force. The consequences to joint deployments are obvious. This has to end. Coordinated Annual Review on Defence intends to achieve this by coordinating the national defence plans of the Member-States.

The best proof of the commitment and the resolve of the European Union to strengthen its role as a global security provider is the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027 proposal, presented by the Commission in 2 May. Because strategies and objectives acquire substance only when they are backed with the required funds to move forward. This is the case with MFF 2021-27. To be more precise:

- The EU budget for security and defence will be significantly reinforced to €27.5 billion. This includes a 22 fold increase in EU investment in defence spending;
- A budget of €13 billion would be dedicated to the European Defence Fund. Eligible PESCO projects can be financed by this Fund;
- An additional dedicated budget of €6.5 billion will be allocated to Military Mobility, one of the PESCO projects;
- Last but not least, European Peace Facility, an off-budget instrument, proposed to support other defence-related activities.
It has to be added though that these funds are meant to supplement national defence budgets, as the defence of any given nation remains a national responsibility.

An additional deliverable, actually the only one that has already been delivered, is the Military Planning and Conduct Capability for the European Union's non-executive military missions. This is an entity that filled a long identified gap in the military chain of command, restoring its continuity and robustness. Not perfect yet, still struggling with insufficient staffing. It is nonetheless a proof of how fast European Union can move forward when circumstances call for immediate action.

It would be a mistake, when addressing security issues, not to make a reference to our already existing fast response capability, the Battlegroups. A capability that has been left idle since its creation, because of political reluctance and inability to reach an agreement on a financing mechanism for its use. We need to find practical ways to allow for the use of this tool, if the circumstances call for that.

I will stop here but remain open for questions.

Thank you.

Edited by Captain (GRC/N) Vasileios Loukovitis