Ladies and Gentlemen,

In exactly two weeks, I will have handed over my position as the Chairman of the EU Military Committee to my friend, Claudio, General Graziano. Quite possibly, this is the last speech I will deliver in my current capacity. I think of no better subject to discuss than Civilian-Military cooperation.

This three words phrase puts in a nutshell the very substance of the new European Union. The European Union that made the security and the protection of its citizens its strategic priority. The European Union that is committed to put its entire toolbox into use in order to address the pressing demand of the European citizens.

Our CSDP Missions and Operations, and with the word "our" I refer to both Civilian and Military, constitute the first line of the EU engagement with the factors that challenge our security in Europe. We are right where the problem lies, trying to cure the problem, not to relieve the symptoms.

In some of these places, we are deployed together. Together we put our efforts to the service of both the EU interests and to those of the host nation. Together we are the face of the European Union, a credible force, a caring partner.

Do we work together? Not as closely as we could. There is much space to cover, if we want to exploit our respective potential to the most. Each of us has its own strengths. Each one of us has its own limitations. Each of us, every day,
has to fight his way through. In order to best help our hosts, maybe we should try harder to help each other to overcome, or to circumvent, the problems that he faces.

How could that be possible? By rediscovering the ancient art of communicating. By establishing regular meetings at all levels and exchanging plans, concerns and ideas. By being creative in finding practical solutions instead of taking cover behind official documents. Of course, we should not be carried away and try to cope with all the problems at the same time. Nevertheless, I deem it important to achieve some quick and easy victories, so that a certain mentality and impetus is established.

Thankfully, there is no competition between us. The respective mandates we have for our Missions and Operations are quite clear and delineate the responsibilities each one of us has. We do not step on each other's toes. This does not mean that we cannot be supportive of each other. This does not exclude that we can be complementary to each other. And, finally, it does not exclude the possibility of doing things together, wherever such an opportunity presents itself.

I encourage you to think outside the box. To try to identify areas where our respective strengths could be of use to the other and offer them. To communicate our areas of concern and seek for advice, or assistance. Not to feel restrained by what is provided in formal documents but to challenge their relevance in real life conditions and propose amendments. For the record, I do not call for disobedience, or for a revolution. You would not hear this from a military man. What I am really saying is that we should seek for evolution. Therefore, what I ask you to do is to propose solutions.

Solutions that never come top-down. On the contrary, they need to be put to the test on the ground, be fine-tuned, prove their applicability and that they can bring the desired results and then, to be showcased to the higher echelons of our bureaucracy and become standard operating procedures.

This is not enough. From our side we, in Brussels, we also have to be more open-minded, more prone to ideas that originate from the Missions and Operations. We need to go the extra mile and provide them with timely and workable solutions to the problems they face, until more concrete and
permanent ones are formally agreed. We too have to talk more with each other. And we have to impose this spirit to the entirety of our respective institutions.

If you, ladies and gentlemen, have the responsibility to identify solutions and ways for more practical cooperation on the field, so that your life becomes easier and your Missions more effective, we from our part have the responsibility to find ways to ensure this cooperation from day-one in the future. Lessons learned and best practices need to be osmosed throughout our Missions and Operations. The knowledge and experience gained so hard in one place, may prove to be relevant to the situation other Missions face.

Last year, when the Military Planning and Conduct Capability was established, a joint support coordination cell was also foreseen, to act as a liaison and facilitate its working closely with its existing civilian counterpart, the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC). This cell, among other tasks, can become the vehicle to share expertise, knowledge and best practices on issues relevant to both military and civilian missions. At the same time, it is expected that it exploits as much civilian-military synergies as possible.

I would imagine that this idea is replicated in all the areas our respective missions and operation are deployed side-by-side, in an informal way, possibly in the form of regular staff meetings. Even if it helps just to inform the other party of the scheduled activities for the following period, it would be a good start for considering how one side's program fits or intervenes with the other's.

I certainly believe that cooperation, coordination and complementarity are the key words that describe the game as it should be. The three "C"s of our missions and operations.

I am sure that there are more ideas out there. So, here is my concluding, last advice: never turn down an idea without first thinking about it. Never close your door to the young member of the team that will come all eager and enthusiastic to share his or her opinion. This view from the ground may be different from the one that you have, being at the top. But most of the times, this diversity of views is extremely useful.
Closing I urge you to keep in mind that whatever is written on paper, it can be rewritten. It is called, evolution.

I wish you every luck with your Missions.

Thank you.

Edited by Captain (GRC/N) Vasileios Loukovitis