Dear Luca (Jahier, President of EESC)

Dear Members of the Bureau, good afternoon.

First of all, let me thank your President for the kind invitation for today's meeting, a tangible sign of the attention given to the military component of the EU that, along the other tools, is key for the overall success of the Union's policies and strategies.

Before diving into the subject, though, I'd like to say that, approaching today's meeting, I had the opportunity to read some of the in-depth analysis provided by your committee on CSDP-related matters, with the so-called opinion papers.

From my point of view, I found them as solid works highlighting the importance given by you on defence and security matters, from the employers-employed aspects to a broader view of EU interests, as cited in one of the most relevant conclusions, in my opinion, which I quote:

"European defence is the development of a widespread European culture of defence and security, to give a full meaning to European citizenship."

I appreciate very much the association between defence and security culture with meaningful citizenship, as the two concepts, I agree, march hand in hand.
And I believe that this point is every day more clear to European Union women and men, who are looking at the crises in our close neighbourhood and fearing the potential negative effects.

In fact, the New Year did not start as most of us wished for, unfortunately.

What we are currently witnessing is new threats adding to the old ones, most of which coming from the South, confirming the well-known "triangle" of concerns (terrorism, irregular migration, instability, mostly around the African continent), which calls for urgent attention, I'd say immediate attention.

On top of this, let me also highlight the incognita about the role that actors like Russia and Turkey, or maybe China seek to play in the overall scenario.

In a sense, what we have now is an extremely magmatic and dangerous situation, the result of a combination between the Butterfly Effect (of crises coming from far away), with the Domino Effect (with crises causing other crises).

That is why the events in Libya and Iraq have not really surprised us, as we knew the symptoms were there.

But it's not too late!

Au contraire, from a constructive point of view, I would stress that no crisis comes without an opportunity.

In this case for the EU.

In fact, while it is now obvious that no single nation (without second interests!) is fitted (or willing) to take on board all these challenges, EU institutions not only have acknowledged the sense of urgency, but have also all the tools to react, in line with its Global Strategy, with a specific autonomous space.
• For those who may not be fully familiar with it, I remind you that with the Global Strategy, we - Europeans - demonstrated the understanding of the need for greater responsibility in matter of our own security, to be ready and able to deter any external threat to our citizens and way of life.

• The Military Committee that I chair was deeply involved in the development of the Global Strategy.

• In fact, our Committee, being composed of the Chiefs of Defence of all 28 EU member states, ensure that the voice of the end-users of military capabilities is heard among the EU institutions and that it is incorporated into the decision-making process at all stages and levels of the evolution of the Security and Defence Policy.

• This is also done from my position as Military Advisor to the High Representative.

• All together, we raised the Level of Ambition of the European Union, to become an active and effective player in the overall security scenario, consistently with the evolving and the new security threats and challenges.

• Of course, in cooperation with Partners (NATO in primis), but also alone, if necessary, thanks to the efforts we are making towards a new Strategic Autonomy.

• I know your Committee has dealt with the concept, but I'd like to stress a couple of points.

• Strategic Autonomy is about to be better positioned to undertake military missions and operations without needing to rely on others, neither for capabilities nor for the capacity to act.

• For the capabilities, in fact, we are looking at acquiring those identified critical tools that will allow us to fulfil the agreed Level of Ambition, with the so-called Headline Capability Goals process.
• In this vein, we are developing or implementing initiatives like PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation), CARD (Coordinated Annual Review on Defence), EDIDP (European Defence Industrial Development Programme) and the EDF (European Defence Fund), all aiming at a Europe of Defence.

• In particular, we look with great expectations to the implementation of the EDF, a process in which - as Military Committee – we could play an extremely relevant role, not foreseen at the moment.

• The EDF, I remind you, is a mechanism designed to provide the means and the financial support in the field of Research and Development, making cooperation more attractive to participating states.

• One of the clear objectives is to contribute to the improvement of European defence cooperation, avoiding waste of resources or duplication of efforts, including from an industrial point of view.

• By the way, even thinking to cut the budget for the EDF, looking at the security scenario surrounding us, will be short-sighted, in my opinion.

• So far about capabilities.

• As for the capacity to act, this is a message we are continuously trying to get through: the common political vision that the EU has clearly stated, now needs to be demonstrated by speaking and acting with a single voice.

• With its Global Strategy and the Strategic Autonomy, therefore, the EU is the organization best positioned to react to today's crises, because of its diversified, complete and unique toolbox, which includes political, diplomatic, economic and military means.

• Now, while we know that there are no pure military solutions to crises, what we really need is a balanced mix of all those instruments of power, in an integrated approach allowing the conditions for
dialogue, discuss solutions, implement them and monitor the aftermath…

• Therefore, the military dimension of the EU, which I represent here, becomes instrumental or complementary for other tools to come into the game, from the early stages of crisis, to de-escalation, to return to normality.

• And in reference to the crisis, we note the outcomes of Sunday's Berlin Conference and yesterday's Foreign Affairs Council, where all parties involved agreed that there are no pure military solutions, but for monitoring the ceasefire and the embargo, it could be evaluated the use of military means.

• Beside the crisis in Libya, though, the EU is already making use of the military tool to support its strategy, in the form of Missions and Operations.

• Let me quickly remind you where we are currently engaged, starting from the oldest operation, ALTHEA, in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

• The operation aims at contributing to a safe and secure environment, providing capacity-building and collective training to the local Armed Forces and supporting the overall EU comprehensive strategy for the country.

• Moving South, we have Operation SOPHIA in the Mediterranean, designed to disrupt illegal smuggling and arms and human traffickers from Libya to Europe, but also involved in training the Libyan Coastguard to counter illegal activities.

• As you know, this operation is currently lacking naval assets, but EU is thinking about revamping SOPHIA, as recently mentioned by the HR.

• Then, Operation ATALANTA in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, which has achieved excellent operational results over the 10 years, protecting World Food Programme transports and other
vulnerable shipping from piracy at sea. The operation also offers an important platform for cooperation with third States.

- Finally, our three Training Mission, in Mali, Central Africa and Somalia.
- One of the common points among all the mentioned activities is that the EU has found a particular a specific role, where it can really excel, which is helping to build the capacities of our partners.
- In this context, let me highlight one point: while no one doubts about the big results and the even bigger potential of these activities, we are still facing problems - by Member States - in generating personnel.
- Something to think about, in terms of CREDIBILITY by the Union.
- Another common point I would like to point, is that - beside Althea – all those activities develop along a clear arch of crisis, coming from the Mediterranean Sea, going through the Red Sea, touching Sahel, the Gulf of Aden, toward the Persian Gulf, at which EU is really looking with great attention.
- I was in New Delhi, last week, together with the HR/VP, for one of the most prominent fora covering civilian and military aspects of the indo-pacific region.
- In the panel I attended, concerning the current and future role of Europe in Asia, it was loudly voiced that the security stakeholders in that region look at the EU with great expectations, recognizing its potential in the field of diplomacy, but also in military to military working relationship.
- Particularly in reference to the maritime environment, a domain of the utmost importance, taking stock of tools like the Maritime Coordinated Presence initiative, for example.
- And to conclude the subject of Operations and Missions, let me recall that the EU today can count on our own coordinating
structure, the so called Military Planning and Conduct Capability, a clear sign of our efforts toward the Strategic Autonomy.

- As I would like to leave some time for interaction, let me conclude here with a final reference to the scenario mentioned at the beginning.

- In today's uncertain times, EU has clearly identified its goal to be a protagonist, particularly when it comes to security of our citizens.

- But security and peace, I duly remind you, cannot be given for granted, but require attention, energies and resources.

- And when I look at one of the objectives of your Committee, about "promoting the values on which European integration is founded and advancing, in Europe and across the world, the cause of democracy and participatory democracy, as well as the role of civil society organisations," I cannot imagine that happening without the requisite of a free and secure environment, which is the ultimate objective we contribute to, as military component of the Union.

- Thank you all and I stand ready for your comments or questions.