



**The Chairman of the European Union Military  
Committee**



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**Serbia - CEUMC speech at**

**General Staff Course and MoD and GS Personnel**

***"The EU Military Committee and the Global Strategy:  
Combining Strategic Autonomy and Partnership"***

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Dear MILAN, (*Gen. MOJSILOVIC, CHOD*)

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is a pleasure for me to be here with you, today.

As Former CHIEF OF THE ITALIAN ARMY GENERAL STAFF and as Chief of the Italian Defence I visited your Country before.

I must say, then, I know the high efficiency of the Serbian Armed Forces and the key role that your country can play for the stability and the security of the Region.

Today, I am honoured to be here in my capacity as Chairman of The Military Committee of the European Union.

Earlier, I had the pleasure and the honour of meeting with your Chief of Defence (*Gen Milan Mojsilović*), your Minister of Defence (*Mr Aleksandar Vulin*) and the Minister of Foreign Affairs (*Mr Ivica Dačić*).

In all the meetings, I had the opportunity to discuss the importance of the relationships and the strong bond between EU and SERBIA, and the importance of participation of partners in EU missions and operations, as a contribute to global security.

Additionally, we stressed that Western Balkans, our near neighbourhood, remain a priority for EU policy, as recently stated by the HR: *"The Western Balkans are Europe and will be part of the EU's future, of a stronger, stable and united European Union."*

We all agreed that is a particularly important moment for the EU, a moment of great expectations.

Never like now, the EU has found its autonomous space and all the instruments to confirm itself as the most reliable security provider, in cooperation with partners, across the globe.

Today, I will discuss with you the role of the EU Military Committee, and how it fits in reference to this new approach to security, as described in the EU Global Strategy.

Then, I will describe how this Strategy is implemented.

Finally, I will touch upon a vital concept for the European Union, the so-called Strategic Autonomy, and how this autonomy is not a contradiction, but a complement to the principles of cooperation and partnership, which are part of our collective DNA, as European Union.

Particularly when we talk about Security and Defence.

Let's start from the beginning.

The EUMC, the Committee I chair, is composed of the Chiefs of Defence of ALL 28 EU Member States who convene personally or through their Military Representatives.

The Committee was set up by a European Council Decision back in January 2001, and since then it has been actively engaged in the evolution of European Security and Defence, providing continuous, concrete recommendations and advice to the political authorities on matters of military concern.

To be more specific, our committee ensures 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.

I act as the spokesperson for the Military Committee and as such I attend the Council meetings when decisions with defence implications are to be taken.

I am also the Military Advisor to the High Representative and act as the Primary Point of Contact for all Operation Commanders.

The EUMC have been fully involved in the development of EU current master document, the Global Strategy, from the conceptual phase to the ongoing implementation.

With the Global Strategy, launched in 2016, we – Europeans - demonstrated the understanding of the need for greater responsibility in matter of our own security.

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, challenges, and opportunities.

These are the principles behind the EU Global Strategy, which EU Member States materialize in the significant efforts for its implementation, through different means.

The EU, in fact, is using all the tools at its disposal for the success of this integrated strategy, from the diplomatic to the legal, from the economic to the military.

On the military side, Member States can demonstrate their will to fulfil the objective of the Strategy by actively participating in EU-LED Operations and Missions.

But in this effort, the EU is not alone.

The new Level of Ambition mentioned in the Global Strategy, in fact, defines three Strategic Priorities for EU security and defence:

- to respond to external conflicts and crises,
- to protect the EU and its citizens,
- to help building the capacities of our PARTNERS.

And today I want to focus on this last point:

One of the main objectives of the integrated strategy by the EU is, indeed, to reinforce our partnership cooperation, sharing EU values and supporting a sustainable security.

And this approach to cooperation is confirmed by the opening of our operations and missions to partner contribution: five out of the six engagements the EU is currently running welcome troop contributions from non-EU Countries.

Let me then briefly list our three military operations and three training missions, starting from the oldest operation, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where EU is running ALTHEA.

Operation ALTHEA aims to contribute to a safe and secure environment, by 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, which has been recently extended until the end of March 2020, mainly aimed at disrupting the business model of illegal smuggler and arms and human traffickers from Libya to Europe, and at training the Libyan coastguard in order to build its capacity to counter illegal activities.

Finally, we have 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.

both these two missions at sea are around the African continent, which is where the EU is providing its main CSDP effort, as the root causes of many existing challenges lie there and the “triangular” relationship between the security variables - terrorism-migration-instability - is more evident.

I want to clarify that, although there is not a direct connection between terrorism and migration, and recalling that immigrants as such are not criminals, we cannot mitigate the consequences of migration without supporting the countries of origin.

In the African continent, the EU runs also 3 military Training Missions, in Mali, Central African Republic and Somalia, providing training to the local armed forces and advice to the military leadership.

A common factor for all our 6 operations and missions, though, is the problem of force generation: due to their complexity, we are constantly committed to match the operational needs with the contribution of forces, funds and other assets.

Drawing from my personal experience on the ground as battalion commander in Mozambique, Multinational Brigade Commander in Afghanistan in NATO's ISAF and in particular as Force Commander for UNIFIL in Lebanon, I know very well the problems that force generation brings to the Commanders in the field.

This is why, beside the commitment of Member States, we encourage and welcome partners contribution, also taking advantage of tools like the European Peace Facility, a proposal by the HR for a fund that will enable the financing of operational actions under the Common Foreign and Security Policy that have military or defense implications.

The European Peace Facility aims at increasing effectiveness of operations, supporting partners, carry out broader actions, as capacity building, provision of training, equipment or infrastructure. The EPF will assist in building the capacities of partner countries' armed forces to preserve peace, prevent conflict and address security challenges.

Good news is that several partners are already providing some vital assets in EU-led military operations and training missions.

Among them, Serbia is demonstrating its engagement through participation in EUTM SOMALIA (6), EUTM MALI (3), EUTM RCA (7) and OPERATION ATALANTA (5).

These efforts constitute a clear indication of your interest for European defence development and willingness to join our European efforts for global stability.

In this regard, it must be highlighted that Serbia is the only country in the Balkans to actually engage militarily in Africa. In the field, Serbian soldiers are recognized for their skills and reliability.

The specific sector – the medical - in which you contribute, is key for the sustainability of our training missions.

Of course, we would warmly welcome and value any additional contribution you might want to offer, now or in the future, like the possible participation in EU BATTLEGROUP.

EU Battlegroups - for those who may not know - are multinational, military units, usually composed of minimum 1500 personnel each and form an integral part of the European Union's Military Rapid Reaction Capacity to respond to emerging crises and conflicts around the world. In recent months, the Battlegroups have received new impetus and relevance and would greatly benefit of personnel contribution.

And since Mil-to-Mil Relationship are fundamental for the EU approach to foreign policy, we also welcome and we value other interactions between EU and Belgrade, like the attendance to EU CHODs meetings by your CHOD, the recent deployment of a military liaison officer to the EU delegation in Belgrade, or the possible participation of your personnel in security-related courses, organized by the European Security Defence College.

Having said that, the full implementation of the Global Strategy requires an enhanced commitment by EU Member States and Partners.

Areas of crisis are increasingly needing attention, and our mission and operation must receive proper contributions.

In spite of the mentioned shortfalls in force generation, though, let me take this opportunity to commend all women and men in uniform serving under EU and other international organizations flag, for their commitment to peace and security, and their great achievements on the ground.

Notwithstanding this clear approach toward partnership, the EU – with the introduction of the concept of Strategic Autonomy – has been perceived, by few, as pursuing a one-man show, aiming at a competition with NATO or other entities, or a slow disengagement from cooperation.

Strategic Autonomy, instead, is not a fancy option for the EU, but a true necessity, fully coherent with the fundamental EU requirement for synergies, cooperation and partnership.

Strategic Autonomy is about the greater responsibility that EU is taking for its security and defence.

By encouraging EU member states to enhance their financial and operational investments in defence, the hope is that the EU will be

better positioned to undertake military missions and operations without needing to rely on the political and military support of others.

In very simple words, strategic autonomy should be defined as: freedom for or freedom to, not freedom from.

Freedom to act alone, if necessary, but in cooperation, whenever and wherever needed.

And in order to achieve this autonomy, EU needs to gain some autonomy particularly in defence structures and policies, by developing its own capabilities in accordance with the agreed requirements.

This is what the EU is currently doing, with initiatives like PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation), CARD (Coordinated Annual Review on Defence) and the EDF (European Defence Fund), on top of the existing EDIDP (European Defence Industry Development Programme).

Very briefly, PESCO is a framework to create a more integrated cooperation among Member States, by developing and acquiring defence capabilities and making those capabilities easily available for EU military missions and operations.

CARD, instead, is a useful tool that consists in mapping defence spending and capability planning by member States, in order to highlight areas at risk of duplication or opportunities for cooperation.

Finally, the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the European Defence Industry Development Programme (EDIDP) COMPLEMENT the previous tools, providing the means and the financial support to achieve PROJECTS AND OBJECTIVES, particularly in the field of research and procurement, making cooperation MORE ATTRACTIVE to participating states.



These initiatives, although still at an early stage, demonstrate the willingness to develop an appropriate degree of "freedom of action", in particular in technological and industrial terms.

Autonomy is achieved where needed, at different degrees, somewhere between fair dependency and full autonomy.

It's important to stress that these military capabilities will still belong to the Member States, therefore available to contribute to a STRONGER Europe, to a stronger NATO, and to stronger transatlantic security.

In the case of NATO, let me remind us all that 22 of the 28 EU Member States are also NATO Allies.

And that the majority of EU and NATO nations adopts the "single set of forces" concept, which precludes the permanent commitment of different sets of forces to each organization but, instead, assign them on contingency basis.

This creates a strong willingness to avoid duplication.

One of the most significant cooperation activity, in this sense, is the Military Mobility, an excellent example of complementarity and as such, a possible inspiration for cooperation in other areas.

So, are the cooperation and the partnership in contradiction with the notion of Strategic Autonomy?

I guess, everybody would say no, at this time.

What really matters is how the word 'EUROPE' and 'AUTONOMY' are combined together.

It's not about Member States becoming autonomous, but about committing and complementing each other for an autonomous European Union.

I conclude:

Ladies and gentlemen, European Union approach to global security is a mix of pragmatism and collective aspirations.

As an old Serbian proverb says:

“Be humble for you are made of earth.

Be noble for you are made of stars”.

We SURE need to be HUMBLE, but we must aim high, together, if we hunt for security.

Thank you again Milan, thank you all for your attention, and I stand ready for your questions, if any.