



Factsheet: EU-NATO cooperation on Maritime Security

Summary

EU-NATO cooperation in the maritime domain represents a key element of the two organisations' endeavour. The long-standing cooperation between EU and NATO was reinforced with the 2016 Joint Declaration by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The EU revised the Action Plan implementing the EU Maritime Security Strategy in June 2018 and it calls for stepping up EU and NATO cooperation and joint activities through seven actions. It refers to NATO as a natural partner for cooperation in a number of maritime security-related activities. The revised Action Plan also contributes to the implementation of the EU Global Strategy and to the role of the EU as a global maritime security provider. Examples of operational cooperation between the EU and NATO include: the joint effort on the fight against piracy in the Indian Ocean; cooperation at tactical and operational level in the Mediterranean sea; the joint organisation of a seminar on lessons learnt on the fight against piracy, and the EU cooperation with NATO accredited maritime Centres of Excellence and Training Centres.

1. EU and NATO Maritime Security Policy Framework

1.1 The European Union Maritime Security Strategy and Action Plan

The EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) is the cornerstone document that drives the Union effort on ensuring a secure global maritime domain. The revised EU MSS Action Plan, adopted in June 2018, features different actions related to cooperation with NATO and: foresees the mainstreaming of maritime security into bilateral meeting agendas; the enhancement of cooperation within the framework of the Joint Declaration; the sharing of information on a voluntary basis; the organisation of cross-sectoral maritime security training and exercises; the fostering of cooperation in the area of maritime training and education; the pursuit of cooperation with NATO at operational level between EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia and Operation Sea Guardian; the continued support for activities aimed at countering human and other illicit smuggling/trafficking activities at sea.

1.2 The Alliance Maritime Strategy and its operationalization

The Alliance Maritime Strategy of 2012 remains the overarching framework for NATO maritime activities and covers the full spectrum of NATO's core tasks as defined by the Strategic Concept. It has been complemented by the Concept for Maritime Security Operations Tasks, also agreed in 2012. In 2014, Allies decided to operationalise the Alliance Maritime Strategy and the Concept covering six maritime work strands, one of which is Enhancing NATO-EU Coordination, Cooperation and Complementary in the Maritime Domain. In addition to regularly reviewing NATO-EU operational cooperation, informal exchanges between NATO and EU staffs take place regularly to work together on a common set of maritime actions, including reciprocal briefings on maritime issues among the two organizations, lessons learned from operations, and ways to enhance a better understanding on both organizations' respective maritime activities.

1.3. The Joint Declaration and the EU-NATO Strategic Partnership

EU-NATO cooperation constitutes an integral pillar of the EU's work aimed at strengthening European security and defence, as part of the implementation of the EU Global Strategy, an important aspect that has been appropriately captured by the revised EUMSS Action Plan.

In July 2016, the EU and NATO signed the [Joint Declaration](#) in Warsaw, updated in July 2018, with the aim of giving new impetus and new substance to the EU-NATO strategic partnership. The Joint Declaration identified seven concrete areas where cooperation between the two organisations should be enhanced, including operational cooperation at sea. EU and NATO committed to maritime security cooperation, including exploring possibilities for mutual logistical support and information sharing, and called to make full use of the Shared Awareness and De-confliction mechanism. As provided by the



Joint Declaration, EU and NATO jointly organised in 2017 a seminar on lessons learnt from the fight against piracy in the Indian Ocean, and on the interactions in the Mediterranean.

2. Past and Ongoing EU-NATO Operational Cooperation

EU and NATO have also established complementary initiatives aiming at enhancing maritime risk awareness to improve the security of the shipping community operating in high risk areas. The EU and NATO have successfully engaged in operational cooperation at sea, notably in the Mediterranean, including the Aegean, and Horn of Africa-Red Sea theatres.

2.1 Mediterranean

The strategic partnership between the EU and NATO is currently reflected at tactical and operational level in the existing cooperation and coordination between EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia (ENFM) and Operation Sea Guardian in the Central Mediterranean. The two military operations actively exchange information. The arrangement also covers mutual logistical support in terms of i) ashore facilities, ii) role 2 capability afloat and iii) replenishment at sea. In the context of the UN arms embargo against Libya NATO Allies agreed in principle that, upon the EU request, Op Sea Guardian is authorised to support EUNAVFOR MED Sophia in its implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 2292 (2016) – currently extended by UNSCR 2473 (2019) – by accompanying suspicious vessels.



EU and NATO staffs continue exploring modalities to enhance coordination, complementarity and cooperation in the Mediterranean. On a rotational basis, the two Organisations chair the Shared Awareness and De-Confliction mechanism in the Mediterranean (SHADE MED) as the main forum for sharing information and coordination of efforts.

2.2 Horn of Africa-Red Sea



EUNAVFOR Operation ATALANTA, deployed by the EU in 2008 off the Horn of Africa and in the Western Indian Ocean, had cooperated successfully with NATO operation OCEAN SHIELD for eight years until the conclusion of the NATO operation in 2016. Regular exchanges continue within the format of SHADE Bahrain, initiative launched in 2008 as a way of coordinating activities with regards to counter-piracy operations and self-protection measures in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean. Its key aspects include

exchange of views and information sharing between stakeholders; coordination possibilities for the escorting of merchant shipping through the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC); aerial coverage of the piracy high risk area by maritime patrol aircrafts; and coordinated efforts to deal effectively with the piracy threat. EUNAVFOR Op. ATALANTA established also, in close cooperation with industry, the Maritime Security Centre Horn of Africa (MSCHOA) which still cooperates with NATO MARCOM. The MSCHOA provides 24-hour manned monitoring of vessels transiting through the Gulf of Aden and has achieved unparalleled levels of civil-military and international cooperation aimed at improving security at sea and reducing risks of attacks.

2.3 Cooperation EU – NATO Accredited Maritime CoEs and NMIOTC

The EU, NATO accredited maritime Centres of Excellence – Combined Joint Operation from the Sea, Confined and Shallow water, Naval Mine Warfare – and NATO Maritime Interdiction Operational Training Centre (NMIOTC), also cooperate under the framework of the EU NATO Joint Declaration by sharing knowledge and exchanging expertise, including in support of partners.