



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation N°809 Vienna, 27 January 2016

EU Statement on Sub-Regional Co-operation

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome Major General Martin Wijnen, Deputy Commander of the Land Forces of the Netherlands, and Colonel (GS) Axel Desfossés, from the Defence Development Division, Strategy Department, Defence Staff of Belgium, to the FSC, and thank them for their stimulating presentations.

We appreciate the opportunity to listen to lessons learnt from bilateral as well as sub-regional military cooperation of BENELUX countries. These presentations come only few months after our security dialogue on Nordic Defence Cooperation, which provided us with information on regional military cooperation of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. We welcome the initiative of the respective FSC Chairmanships to include this topic into the FSC agenda in order to share perspectives on the advantages, but also on possible challenges for their cooperative approach in the area of defence. These interventions are yet another example that closer defence cooperation, based on geographic proximity, common objectives and culture can help to close the existing gap between capability needs and available budgets.

These efforts complement traditional international and regional frameworks, such as NATO and the European Union. In the European Union, we follow a similar approach to increased defence cooperation. The Code of Conduct on pooling and sharing proposed by the European Defence Agency – and adopted in November 2012 by the Council of the European Union - comprises a series of actions to support cooperative efforts of EU Member States to develop defence capabilities. The progress achieved on Pooling and Sharing was welcomed by the European Council in December 2013. On this basis, during the November 2014 European Defence Agency Steering Board, Defence Ministers adopted a Policy Framework to foster

more systematic and long-term defence cooperation, as mandated by the December 2013 European Council. The aim is to provide a solid and coherent basis for defence cooperation in Europe. It complements the Code of Conduct on Pooling & Sharing whose main objective is to mainstream cooperation into national defence planning.

As the security context continues to evolve and become more difficult, the European Union pays special attention to find synergies also between civilian and military means and strengthen the ties between CSDP and the area of Freedom, Security and Justice, Human rights and other horizontal aspects of EU crisis management. In line with the so-called comprehensive approach, we are also trying to find possible interactions with crisis prevention and post-conflict reconstruction.

Finally, we once again thank the speakers as well as the FSC Chairmanship for providing us with the opportunity to exchange views on this challenging topic.

We would like to use the presence of the distinguished speakers in our midst and ask them to elaborate whether and to what extent the BENELUX Defence Cooperation can be used as a model for other groups of states and other regions.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.