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NOTE

from :	General Secretariat of the Council
to :	Delegations
Subject:	Summary record of the meeting of the European Parliament Sub-committee on Security and Defence (SEDE) , Brussels, 3 June 2013

The meeting was chaired by Mr Danjean (EPP, FR).

I. Building European military capabilities

Exchange of views with:

- **Claude-France Arnould, Chief Executive Director, European Defence Agency**
- **General Jean-Paul Paloméros, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, NATO**

Mr Danjean opened this item on the agenda by voicing some scepticism about the upcoming European Council devoted to defence matters. He noted that no concrete proposal was yet on the table. Despite that, the area of capabilities was that in which expectations were the highest.

Ms Arnould set the scene by describing the issues faced: well-known challenges and threats, more and more expensive replies to those threats, budget constraints and downsized defence budgets in Member States, with the United States declaring that they would no longer systematically provide 80% of capabilities in defence. Against this background, the EDA had stressed that defence was not only a matter of security, but also of innovation and growth. Investments had to be maximized and cooperation strengthened to improve effectiveness.

Ms Arnould added that the EDA had already made a number of suggestions for discussion at the December European Council: refuelling, satellite capacities, cyber-defence etc. She warned that cutting investment in defence would not only reduce security but also make European industry less competitive at a time when other countries were increasing their military budget. Pooling and sharing capacities was therefore a priority in these times of economic crisis. Overlaps and duplications had to be avoided and Ms Arnould reassured MEPs that there was no competition between the EU "pooling and sharing" and the NATO "smart defence".

General Paloméros spoke about the EU-NATO partnership, stressing that the development of CSDP was completely compatible with NATO. He presented the "smart defence" initiative, whose objective was to have less expensive, more effective and better targeted resources. He stressed the idea of complementarity between the EU and NATO, for example with regard to helicopters. He also indicated that the "pooling and sharing" and the "smart defence" initiatives were key opportunities for the European industry.

During the debate that followed, Ms Panayotova (EPP, BU) called for a European white paper on capabilities. Ms Arnould said that she was rather sceptical as to the usefulness of such a white paper, as there was a risk that it would be a divisive, intellectual exercise, at a moment when EU Member States needed to focus on action. A white paper could also serve as an alibi for failing to make progress, she added. What the EDA was instead promoting was better interaction between Member States as a first step. In reply to Mr Danjean, Ms Arnould mentioned some results already gained from the "pooling and sharing" initiative, namely Satcom (mutualisation of contracts and better availability of satellites), training on helicopters and hopefully soon air-to-air refuelling. Mr Duff (ALDE, UK) shared Mr Danjean's scepticism on the December European Council, criticising in particular the small scale of ambitions, the lack of a shared sense of European security and the absence of strategic direction. He asked Ms Arnould about her views on the UK position on the EDA budget, namely that the UK would not put further resources into the EDA unless it started producing concrete results. According to Mr Duff such a position generated a vicious cycle: the EDA was unable to produce results because it was under-financed. Ms Arnould agreed that EDA could be more efficient if it had more resources, but she acknowledged that unanimity was the way the EDA functioned. She considered that it was better to get specific budgets for specific actions rather than having broader discussions on the general EDA budget. Ms Cronberg (Greens/EFA, FI) wondered why only 11 projects out of 300 proposals for "pooling and sharing" had been chosen.

Ms Arnould replied that the projects chosen covered the more acute shortfalls and had the greatest potential for further development and for building trust between Member States, bearing in mind that defence ministries were as such not designed to cooperate.

General Paloméros insisted on the importance of achieving what had been decided, for example the air-to-air refuelling. He also considered that it was wise to invest in drones both for military and civilian applications. Concerning the greater attention given by the US to Asia, he said that the US expected of Europe to take its full share for building capabilities. He considered that the December European Council could give a very positive signal in that direction. General Paloméros explained that there would no mission withdrawal but simply a change of scope, with the aim of widening cooperation and maximising the focus on interoperability of forces. Despite the challenge such a change would constitute, he considered that it was a promising project for the future. As regards the US perspective, he said that there were huge expectations from the US that Europe would become more a of security provider than a receiver, adding that the window of opportunity should be used.

Ms Arnould replied to Mr Duff that the most important point was more convergence in the timing of the national reviews. She felt that as review templates were tailor made, the differences in military structures could be problematic for common templates suggested by Mr Duff. On the issue of SMEs mentioned by the Chair, she reported that the EDA had proposed a specific action plan and had a series of incentive actions. She informed those present that the EDA had asked SMEs to put emphasis on some specific topics (small drones and cyber protection). Ms Arnould added that the EDA was trying to maintain as many contacts as possible with industry in general, using the Commission services as one of the means to this end. She replied to the Chair that the smaller countries were in fact more disposed to "playing the game" because they had already been convinced of the advantages of enhanced cooperation. General Paloméros confirmed Ms Arnould's analysis that smaller Member States showed more interest in cooperation and wanted to develop this further.

II. Exchange of views with a delegation from the Committee on Defence - House of Representatives - The Netherlands (jointly with the Committee on Foreign Affairs)

The SEDE committee Chair provided a brief overview of the committee's responsibilities and work as well as its priorities.

The Chair of the Dutch delegation (Mr Broeke, VVD) reported on the delegation's agenda and stressed that increased cooperation was of major significance, not least due to the current economic situation.

The introductory statements were followed by question-and-answer sessions. All EP speakers welcomed the dialogue with the representatives from the Dutch national Parliament and called for the further development of such dialogues. Mr Brok (EPP, DE) pointed out that in fact all the December European Council needed was political will. In this respect, Ms Eijssink (PvdA) said that parliaments should make joint statements and that pooling and sharing had been exhaustively discussed and it was time to move forward on this issue. Mr Brok took the view that there should be a concrete proposal on the table to be decided on by the European Council. Ms Berckmoes-Duindam (VVD) added that successful cooperation was already taking place in border regions, yet at political level the discussions were dragging unnecessarily. On the issue of battle-groups raised by Mr Brok and Mr Paşcu (S&D, RO), the SEDE Chair and Mr Vuijk shared the same analysis of their non-use. Mr Vuijk (VVD) said that there was a mix of political complexity and sovereignty concerns and he considered that the approach should be "use them or lose them". He highlighted some other important issues (funding, sectors covered, flexibility, etc.). The SEDE Chair added that the cases of Libya and Mali had shown there was a structural issue within the EU as regards missions (warning, planning). He also mentioned the important and continuing civilian mission deployment issue. Mr Duff showed particular interest as regards the Council decision on the arms embargo on Syria. The Dutch delegation Chair replied that if the embargo were *de facto* lifted, then the EU would have virtually no more leverage and the conflict could become even more dramatic. He added that he had the impression that the decision had been taken too late. In reply to Mr Vuijk's question on SEDE committee members views on bilateral cooperation, the SEDE Chair answered that the majority of the committee had more ambitious objectives, aiming at the most inclusive cooperation possible and political consensus at the top.

III. Date and venue of the next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for 19-20 June 2013 in Brussels.