



Council of the
European Union

021661/EU XXVII. GP
Eingelangt am 28/05/20

Brussels, 28 May 2020
(OR. en)

8360/20

LIMITE

COPS 164
POLMIL 56
CFSP/PESC 426
CSDP/PSDC 256
HYBRID 9
DISINFO 7
CYBER 80
IPCR 18
PROCIV 32

COVER NOTE

From: European External Action Service (EEAS)
To: Political and Security Committee (PSC)

Subject: Fifth progress report on the implementation of the common set of proposals endorsed by EU and NATO Councils on 6 December 2016 and 5 December 2017

Delegations will find attached document [EEAS\(2020\) 579](#).

Encl.: [EEAS\(2020\) 579](#)

EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE



Security and Defence Policy Directorate (SECDEFPOL)

Working document of the European External Action Service

of 27/05/2020

Fifth progress report on the implementation of the common set of proposals endorsed by EU and NATO Councils on 6 December 2016 and 5 December 2017

EEAS Reference	EEAS(2020)579
Distribution marking	
To [and/or GSC distribution acronyms]	PSC
Title / Subject	Fifth progress report on the implementation of the common set of proposals endorsed by EU and NATO Councils on 6 December 2016 and 5 December 2017
[Ref. prev. doc.]	

Fifth progress report
on the implementation of the common set of proposals endorsed by EU and NATO Councils
on 6 December 2016 and 5 December 2017

On 6 December 2016 and on 5 December 2017, EU and NATO Councils endorsed, in parallel processes, a common set of 74 proposals for the implementation of the Joint Declaration signed in Warsaw on 8 July 2016 by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the Secretary General of NATO.

Responding to the taskings by the Ministers of both organizations, regular progress reports on implementation were submitted to the respective Councils in June and December 2017, in June 2018, as well as in June 2019. The present, fifth, report covers the period between June 2019 and June 2020. It elaborates on progress achieved in the implementation of the 74 common proposals by showcasing tangible deliverables in all areas of cooperation.

In particular, the following elements can be highlighted:

- Political dialogue has further intensified at all levels and settings, including in virtual formats, while maintaining the positive trend of mutual and reciprocal cross-briefings. It remains an essential and indispensable instrument for strengthening mutual understanding, building confidence and ensuring reciprocal transparency vis-à-vis the NATO Allies and the EU Member States, as well as their strong engagement.
- The Structured Dialogue on military mobility at staff level continues to contribute to information sharing in the key areas of military requirements, transport infrastructure, transport of dangerous goods, customs and cross border movement permissions.
- In the area of strategic communications, cooperation focused on strengthening mutual alerting on disinformation incidents and hostile information activities, as well as improving capacities related to detection, analysis and exposure to disinformation.
- Efforts continue to ensure the coherence of output between the respective EU and NATO defence planning processes, where requirements overlap, while recognizing the different nature of the two Organisations and their respective responsibilities. Coherence between respective projects and activities was also ensured.

During this reporting period, the first half of 2020 has been affected by the COVID-19 crisis. This pandemic has put all EU Member States and NATO Allies under tremendous strain and brought new vulnerabilities to the surface which, if not adequately addressed, could have an impact on the broader security of the Euro-Atlantic community and its partners. In this context, the health crisis has also affected work on the 74 common proposals by presenting temporary practical challenges to ongoing interactions.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, the EU and NATO have been closely coordinating their respective efforts in the overlapping areas of competence at the political and working level alike. Within the framework of the common set of proposals, several elements have emerged as particularly relevant in the context of the pandemic, including for example: countering disinformation and hostile propaganda; potential logistics support in facilitating the delivery of assistance; responding to cyber threats; exploring the implications of the crisis on respective operational engagements in theatres. EU and NATO staffs are also looking at how the COVID-19 crisis could be factored into other ongoing working strands, such as resilience, exercises and lessons identified or supporting partners in security and defence capacity-building.

In addition to the progress achieved as outlined in the report, the EU-NATO partnership proved its relevance and viability during the all-encompassing COVID-19 crisis. However, there remains a clear need for further enhancing cooperation in several areas, including key horizontal issues embracing the implementation of the common set of 74 proposals, as underlined also in recent exchanges between the High Representative/Vice-President and NATO Secretary General.

The strategic partnership between the two Organisations continues to be taken forward in full respect of the agreed guiding principles enshrined in the Warsaw and Brussels Joint Declarations on EU-NATO cooperation.

While the implementation of the 74 common proposals is based on regular, close and pragmatic staff-to-staff engagement, continued full engagement and support by the NATO Allies and the EU Member States remains crucial. In this context and in light of known and new challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever that the EU and NATO continue to consolidate and further strengthen their close and mutually reinforcing cooperation and strategic partnership for the benefit of the Euro-Atlantic security and their members.

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Countering hybrid threats

Cooperation in the area of countering hybrid threats continued, including through strengthened staff-to-staff interactions and with the crucial support of the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki. Its membership continued to grow with 27 NATO Allies and EU Member States having joined the Centre to date.

In this context, both staffs actively participated in workshops, including one on harbour protection against hybrid threats in October 2019, which included a Table Top exercise, and another on the impact of disruptive technologies in hybrid threats in February 2020, as part of the Hybrid Warfare and Future Technologies project.

Well established working level relations between the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell and the NATO Hybrid Analysis Branch and extending to the Helsinki Centre of Excellence continued to develop through monthly staff-to-staff exchanges with the aim of strengthening situational awareness, mutual understanding of respective activities, as well as to explore further potential cooperation avenues.

The two staffs continued the established practice of preparing Parallel and Coordinated Assessments, for example on hybrid tactics and strategies.

Cooperation between EU and NATO staffs has continued in the area of strategic communications with a particular focus on addressing hostile information activities. These interactions have focused on increasing information exchange, analysis and capacity development and aimed at strengthening mutual alerting on disinformation incidents and hostile information activities, as well as improving capacities related to detection, analysis and exposure to disinformation. Moreover, staffs regularly exchanged information and coordinated on producing and conveying quality messages on relevant issues to external audiences, including in the context of study visits to respective Headquarters.

Cooperation between the EU's Rapid Alert System and NATO staff has intensified. NATO staff attended the third meeting of the Rapid Alert System in June 2019 to present their capabilities and engage in an exchange of views regarding the challenge of disinformation.

NATO and EU staffs continued to work together on shared trend analysis of disinformation, including on the use of social media targeting the EU and NATO. The Task Force East "EUvsDisinfo.eu" webpage and EU social media accounts are used to raise awareness about disinformation, including regarding NATO. The European External Action Service's (EEAS) StratCom Task Force South and NATO Public Diplomacy Division take part in all Global Coalition against Da'esh Communications Working Group meetings and regularly update the Coalition's Communications Cell on relevant strategic communications work. EEAS, European Parliament and European Commission were regularly briefed by NATO officials; in turn, EEAS was invited on different occasions to brief NATO staff on the work of EEAS StratCom and on disinformation in particular.

In light of the COVID-19 crisis, cooperation between staffs has further intensified in particular in response to heightened disinformation surrounding the pandemic, respective communications planning and amplification of content from meetings involving NATO and EU leadership. EU and NATO staffs shared with each other dedicated Information Environment Assessments and held weekly calls with international partners such as the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism. NATO staff has shared with EU staff the NATO COVID-19 Strategic Communications Framework, the COVID-19 Integrated Communications Plan and a weekly selection of proactive communications products. Furthermore, EEAS StratCom was invited to brief the NATO Crisis Management Task Force on the topic of disinformation surrounding COVID-19 and EEAS StratCom attended the NATO StratCom Working Group.

The EEAS StratCom Task Force East has continued to liaise with the NATO StratCom Centre of Excellence in Riga, including on: a) training materials, developing a joint simulation on the disinformation attack and the response; and b) awareness raising activities. The NATO StratCom Centre of Excellence has been providing inputs for the "Anatomy of Disinformation" campaign that aims to raise awareness about the negative impact of disinformation and to empower society to respond to it.

Cooperation in the field of resilience and civil preparedness was further enhanced, including through dedicated staff meetings – such as the one on direct investment screening methodologies hosted by the EU in July 2019 – and respective cross-briefings to relevant committees and working groups. In September 2019, NATO hosted a workshop on 5G networks and foreign direct investments for both staffs. Furthermore, staffs are sharing information regarding civil preparedness efforts between NATO’s Resilience Baselines and the EU’s Prevention and Preparedness work-streams.

Dedicated staff-to-staff exchanges between the respective medical communities and cross-participation in health preparedness events have contributed to increasing mutual awareness of the ways in which the two organisations respectively prepare for low-probability, high-impact events, including on security of supply and the utility of the recently established rescEU mechanism. This cooperation proved particularly relevant in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, including through bi-weekly coordination meetings between Medical Advisors within respective military staffs, allowing for close coordination and complementarity of efforts. Cooperation between staffs on medical military expertise in the context of MEDEVAC projects also continued.

In the area of counter-terrorism, cooperation continued to develop through cross-briefings, mutual participation in dedicated meetings and specific projects, such as the Workshop on Battlefield Information and the High-Level Conference on countering the threats posed by unmanned aircraft systems, organized by the EU respectively in July and October 2019. Replicating a successful format first launched in 2018, the Finnish Presidency of the Council of the EU hosted in October 2019 an informal seminar bringing together members of EU's **Working Party on Terrorism (International Aspects)** (COTER) and NATO's Political Committee, focusing on Counter Unmanned Aerial Systems and battlefield evidence. Moreover, EU and NATO staff talks on counter-terrorism were organised in November 2019.

Cooperation on Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) issues continued, embracing all relevant stakeholders in order to exchange information and explore avenues for closer engagement. Both staffs attended relevant workshops such as the one on “Resilience and cross-sectoral cooperation in responding to CBRN threats with hybrid elements” in July 2019 as well as the one on “Building Capacities, Strengthening Resilience: EU and NATO partnerships for addressing CBRN risks and threats” in January 2020. The biannual staff talks took place in October 2019 focusing, among others, on capacity building, supporting partners, CBRN defence and resilience or civil-military cooperation. Also, EU staff briefed the NATO Committee on Proliferation on activities and complementary approaches to address CBRN threats on several occasions.

Operational cooperation including maritime issues

EU and NATO staff dialogue on operational cooperation, including in the maritime field, was held on a regular basis at the Headquarters’ level, while the practice of mutual cross-briefings continued in EU and NATO committees on respective activities, including on NATO’s Operation Sea Guardian in September 2019.

In parallel, cooperation and coordination between the two organizations in the Mediterranean at operational and tactical levels was enhanced through regular information exchange between EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia and NATO's Operation Sea Guardian. On 31 March 2020, the EU launched a new Operation in the Mediterranean, EUNAVFOR MED IRINI. The core task of this operation is contributing to the implementation of the United Nations arms embargo on Libya, in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2292 (2016), while preserving, as secondary tasks, all the other tasks of EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia, which was terminated on the same date.

EU and NATO continue leading the Shared Awareness and De-Confliction mechanism in the Mediterranean (SHADE MED) as the main forum for improving situational awareness and exchanging best practices with a view to improving de-confliction and coordination of respective efforts.

NATO and the EU continue to cooperate in the Aegean Sea with information sharing at the operational and tactical levels, thus contributing to stemming smuggling of migrants and illegal migration flows.

New framework options aimed at supporting the normalisation of the lower airspace over Kosovo¹ have been developed and pursued building on earlier bilateral discussions with Belgrade and Pristina regarding political, operational and technical activities. NATO and EU focus on different aspects and remits of the aviation normalization process in the Western Balkans: their efforts reinforce each other and will lead to a coherent and complete framework for reopening the lower airspace when the political circumstances allow.

Cyber security and defence

Cooperation in the field of cyber security and defence has further intensified between staffs with: (1) exchanges on concepts and doctrines; (2) reciprocal participation in cyber exercises; (3) informal exchanges of information on existing and planned training and education courses and of threat indicators; (4) cross-briefings, including on the cyber aspects of crisis management, and (5) regular working meetings.

In October 2019, EU representatives participated in the CYBERSEC 2019 forum, hosted by the NATO Counter Intelligence Centre of Excellence.

In December 2019, at the high-level EU-NATO staff talks on cyber security and defence, thematic sessions focused on efforts to integrate cyber aspects into crisis management and response; enhance network security and resilience, including 5G and supply chain security; promote cyber stability

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) and the International Court of Justice Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

between States; enhance cyber capacity and resilience in partner countries; and strengthen cooperation between respective incident response communities. Cross-briefings by EU and NATO staffs in relevant Committees and/or Working Groups continued, as well as staff meetings, including on the EU Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox and related NATO cyber defence efforts.

Exchanges also continued on concepts and doctrines, including through joint workshops which provide a platform to establish a comprehensive overview of mutually beneficial conceptual ideas and documents in the cyber domain. The latest workshop on concepts and doctrines took place in October 2019.

In terms of strengthening cooperation related to cyber exercises through reciprocal participation, EU staff participated in Cyber Coalition 2019. The EU participated in the annual Cyber Defence Exercise Locked Shields 19 of the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence.

Cooperation on cyber training modularity, launched during the previous reporting period, has further developed. As part of promoting access to respective education and training opportunities, a workshop was organised by staffs in October 2019 with the aim of developing an education and training network on their level. Moreover, EU staff actively participated in the NATO Annual Discipline Conference in October 2019, as well as in a review of NATO's Cyber Command and Control (C2) and the Common Operational Picture Project. The project contributes to reduce the risk of unnecessary duplication, enhance coherence and improve consistency of the respective Cyber Defence Training and Education requirements.

The Technical Arrangement on Cyber Defence between the NATO Computer Incident Response Capability (NCIRC) and the Computer Emergency Response Team for the European Union (CERT-EU) continued to be implemented in line with existing provisions. The Malware Information Sharing Platform is being leveraged to this end with the NATO Communications and Information Agency and CERT-EU having exchanged information on 86 events in total since June 2019. In addition, coordination meetings between staffs were held on a regular basis and exchanges on best practices for technical topics continued at various events, such as the NATO Information Assurance Symposium and the CERT-EU conference.

Defence capabilities

Efforts continue to ensure the coherence of output between the 2018 EU Capability Development Plan (CDP), the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and respective NATO processes such as the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP) and the Partnership for Peace Planning and Review Process (PARP), where requirements overlap, while recognizing the different nature of the two Organisations and their respective responsibilities. Furthermore, in implementing the Headline Goal Process, the EU has ensured coherence of taxonomy and amended timelines to better align with the NDPP.

In this context, EU staff were invited by individual Allies to attend bilateral and multilateral consultations in the framework of the NDPP. In parallel, several EU Member States that are also

NATO Allies or Partners invited NATO staff to their CARD bilateral meetings. Coherence was further pursued in the implementation of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) as evidenced by the fact that 38 out of the current 47 PESCO projects also broadly respond to NATO priorities. Moreover, close staff-to-staff contacts at all levels have contributed to ensure mutual awareness of work under way in each Organisation. Under the single set of forces principle, capabilities developed by members of both Organisations, including those developed multinationally, remain in principle available for NATO and EU operations, subject to national political decisions.

NATO and EU staffs are working together to ensure coherence of multinational efforts, as EU defence initiatives mature and against the background of new multinational High Visibility Projects in NATO. To this end, quarterly expert meetings of EU and NATO staffs continue to ensure respective awareness, complementarity of efforts and avoidance of unnecessary duplication downstream as regards respective multinational projects and programmes. Concrete examples in that respect include areas, such as Air-to-Air Refuelling, Ground Based Air Defence systems, Countering Improvised Explosive Devices, Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS), Maritime Unmanned Systems, Ammunition, and Air Crew Flight Training. In addition, cross-briefings by NATO to the European Defence Agency's (EDA) Steering Board and by the EDA and the European Commission to the Conference of National Armaments Directors respectively continued to take place in 2019 and early 2020.

Progress continues on the implementation of the Military Aviation Strategy according to the respective implementation plans for which the related actions are coordinated through regular staff to staff meetings, as well as through reciprocal participations in EDA Military Aviation Board and NATO Aviation Committee. Since a new regulatory framework in the context of Single European Sky is being developed, staff coordination has been further enhanced to ensure that military inputs, including NATO's, are appropriately taken into account in these deliverables.

EU staff continue to participate in the NATO-EUROCONTROL Air Traffic Management Security Coordinating Group focusing on security risks to aviation, including cyber risk. NATO staff continue to participate in the European Aviation Safety Agency's (EASA) 'European Strategic Coordination Platform', thereby ensuring that NATO's military aviation equities are included in the EASA's Strategy for Cybersecurity in Aviation.

On airworthiness, work continues to develop guidelines, best practices and harmonized approaches for the recognition process of Military Airworthiness Authorities, including process templates (certificates, reports, question sets, etc.) and, where possible, re-use of recognition status information. Cross-participation of respective staffs in the European Military Airworthiness Authorities Forum and the NATO Airworthiness Advisory Group continued to take place in a reciprocal manner, generating valuable inputs for NATO's and EU's distinctive work strands.

Established cooperation in various capability domains continued apace. On Air-to-Air Refuelling, building on the synchronization of the NATO air-to-air refuelling roadmap with respective EU work strands, cross-participation in respective meetings has been proved beneficial to keep good

progress on implementation. Following the first European Air-to-Air Refuelling Conference in September 2018, the EDA and NATO co-hosted a second conference in October 2019, the first of its kind in this format. With continued support by the EU and NATO, the project to field a Multinational Multi-Role Transport Tanker Fleet has further advanced toward the upcoming delivery of the first two Multi-Role Tanker Transport aircraft.

Regarding RPAS Air Traffic Integration, reciprocal efforts are ongoing to associate staffs in their respective working groups. The need for intensified staff-staff co-operation in this critical capability area was recognized and proved beneficial. EDA/EASA Guidelines for Accommodation of MALE-type (Medium Altitude Long Endurance) RPAS in the airspace have been shared with NATO, while NATO have shared open source NATO RPAS standards with the EU. Regarding Satellite Communications (SATCOM), an information exchange visit by EDA to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) SATCOM Management Centre has been scheduled.

Standardisation remains an important area of cooperation to ensure the awareness of both EU Member States and NATO Allies of respective efforts in this regard. In addition to staff-to-staff exchanges, the EDA has delivered updates in meetings of NATO's Committee for Standardisation and NATO updated the EU's Materiel Standardisation Group. At project level, progress has been made in areas such as unmanned ground vehicles and software-defined radio. The European Commission has also hosted staff-to-staff exchange on standardisation in military research and development projects.

Effective cooperation between the EU and NATO has continued on military mobility, building on the previously achieved results, notably the coherence between their respective sets of military requirements. This confirms that military mobility is a key area of shared interest, where the positive momentum must be maintained.

The Structured Dialogue on Military Mobility, bringing together NATO and EU relevant staffs, has contributed to information sharing in the key areas of military requirements, transport infrastructure, transport of dangerous goods, customs and cross border movement permissions. This format of engagement will continue to be used to facilitate coherence and mutual reinforcement of efforts to improve military mobility, as well as to achieve synergies wherever possible, while avoiding unnecessary duplication.

Following NATO's transmission of its updated infrastructure parameters to the EU in March 2019, the Council of the EU approved the update of the Military Requirements for Military Mobility within and beyond the EU in July 2019. During their October 2019 Conference, the Director General of the EU Military Staff provided the Director General of the NATO International Military Staff with the consolidated version of the updated EU Military Requirements for Military Mobility. Based on this, the next steps of the EU Action Plan on Military Mobility continue, notably the update of the EU gap analysis and the definition of the dual-use requirements for future transport infrastructure projects. In this respect, further interactions and exchanges on the geographical scope and main supply routes could benefit the respective work in the two Organizations.

Another important deliverable was achieved by exchanging between staffs the respective networks of National Points of Contact for military mobility. NATO provided the single National Point of Contact list in support of the NATO's rapid movement requirement as established by the NATO Civil Emergency Planning Committee; the EU provided the EU Member States' National Point of Contact list for Military Mobility, established by the EU Military Staff on behalf of the PESCO project on Military Mobility and in implementation of the Council conclusions on security and defence of June 2018². Furthermore, NATO is setting up a 24/7 movement control network between NATO and national civil and military entities. EU and NATO staffs are working together to facilitate the future cooperation and synergies between these networks, including in developing their respective Terms of Reference.

Furthermore, cross-briefings and participation in respective meetings have contributed to transparency and access to information for all relevant aspects of military mobility. EU and NATO staffs have been regularly invited to participate in respective meetings in this field. Moreover, EU representatives briefed NATO Allies on different occasions. NATO staff continue to be regularly invited to the EDA's meetings in the Project Team Movement and Transport and receive updates on the implementation of specific actions related to the EU Action Plan on Military Mobility in areas such as cross-border movement permission and customs. In this context, the creation of an EU Form 302 to be integrated in the EU Customs Code has been done in full transparency vis-à-vis NATO with a view to facilitating a future possible alignment of the templates used by the EU and NATO respectively.

Defence industry and research

Exchanges between EU and NATO staffs continued on wider industry matters and concrete topics particular to industry engagement. The dialogue remained focused on regular updates on industry-related activities and more specifically, on practices regarding standardisation and energy. Valued exchanges on best practices regarding innovative Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)' engagement continued during a dedicated roundtable organized in the margins of NATO Information Assurance Symposium in October 2019. New topics will further be developed on other specific industry-related subjects of common interest.

Staff-to-staff contacts on research and innovation have increased, fostered by the new NATO emerging and disruptive technology roadmap and existing work strands on the EU side, notably the collaborative work in the framework of the EDA. While regular staff contacts took place on several issues of interest, such as Energy or CBRN, collaboration between the EDA and the NATO Innovation Hub in the Allied Command Transformation (ACT) has developed. In this context, contacts have been established between the EDA and the new Innovation Management Unit of NATO Headquarters to ensure mutual awareness of respective work and support mutually reinforcing approaches. The first exchange focused on respective approaches to innovation as well

² Paragraph 18 of Council Conclusions on Security and Defence in the context of the EU Global Strategy, 25 June 2018; <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10246-2018-INIT/en/pdf>

as on Artificial Intelligence (AI), based on the definition, taxonomy and glossary for AI in defence agreed in the EDA framework and, subsequently, shared with NATO staff.

Several high level meetings took place between the NATO Science and Technology Organisation (STO), and the European Commission and the EDA respectively, to exchange on respective strategic direction and key drivers such as autonomy, big data and Artificial Intelligence as well as on the research window of the European Defence Fund. Furthermore, the STO has actively participated in several EU funded maritime research projects, such as OCEAN 2020 under the Preparatory Action of Defence Research, as well as MARISA and COMPASS 2020 under the civil research programme Horizon 2020.

Exercises

Following the successful completion of the Parallel and Coordinated Exercises (PACE) pilot project in 2017 and 2018, the mutual exchange of the lessons identified in these interactions was completed in summer 2019. EU and NATO have each started work to implement relevant lessons.

Building on this experience, discussions were launched at technical level between EU and NATO staffs with a view to developing the plan for implementing Parallel and Coordinated Exercises in the years to come. Cross-briefings to relevant committees were held in autumn 2019.

Discussions on the new Parallel and Coordinated Exercises (PACE) plan are still ongoing at staff level.

While the new plan is being discussed and agreed, EU-NATO cooperation in the domain of exercises will continue, including by mutual invitations to participate in respective exercises on a voluntary basis.

During 2019, EU staff participated in NATO's Crisis Management Exercise 2019 (CMX19), setting up an EU response cell that covered all possible reactions from the EU. NATO staff have been invited to participate in the relevant planning and conduct parts of the EU Integrated Resolve Exercise to be held in 2020. Moreover, NATO staff attended both the Dark Blade 2019 exercise and the 2019 EDA Helicopter Tactics Symposium, while staffs ensured de-confliction of respective exercises schedules in this field.

In terms of NATO military exercises, following the participation of EU staff in the Coalition Warrior Interoperability Exercise 2019 (CWIX19), which provided an excellent opportunity to intensify cooperation with NATO and Partner Nations, a similar effort is anticipated for the execution phase of CWIX20, planned to be conducted in June 2020. The EEAS participated in the planning cycle of this exercise. In addition, the EU Military Staff observed NATO Exercise Trident Jupiter 2019 at the NATO Joint Warfare Centre in November 2019. EU staff were also invited to participate in NATO's Trident Jackal 2019 and Steadfast Jupiter/Jackal 2020. In terms of EU military exercises, the NATO Military Staff participated in the observation event in MILEX 19 and will be invited to observe MILEX 20.

Cross-participation in civil protection exercises continues to be ensured, with NATO invited to observe Civil Protection exercises funded under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism such as EU CHEM REACT exercise in early 2020 and EU similarly involved in relevant medical and CBRN exercises organized by NATO.

Defence and security capacity building

Staff-to-staff consultations continued on a regular basis in Brussels and on the ground as a useful way to exchange views and share information regarding the political and security situation in the three focus countries – Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Moldova, and Tunisia – as well as in other partners, such as Ukraine.

Building on their decision to close the “pilot-country” phase last year, EU and NATO staffs took initial steps to broaden their cooperation to additional focus countries. In this context, exploratory talks on Georgia were held in December 2019. Both sides established respective focal points and agreed to regularly exchange information, both in Tbilisi and Brussels, with a view to maintaining dialogue on key political messages, de-conflicting activities and conducting further discussions on a technical level to map other potential areas of cooperation. An initial meeting took place in Tbilisi in March this year.

In parallel, enhanced staff dialogue facilitated a number of operational activities contributing to de-confliction and coordination of relevant efforts in the following main areas:

- Several activities took place in the area of good governance in the defence and security sector based on a cooperation agreement signed in 2018, by which the European Commission became a financial contributor to NATO Building Integrity (BI) program, and a member of its Steering Group. As part of this agreement, the EU provided financial support to facilitate the participation of Armenian, Georgian, Jordanian, Moldovan, Tunisian and Ukrainian representatives in several NATO BI capacity building activities in the second half of 2019. The EU’s financial support also contributed to the conduct of the first NATO BI-led Peer Review visit in Tunis in November 2019, and the conduct of key leaders’ engagements, to which the EU was invited. In Ukraine, experts of the EU Advisory Mission (EUAM) were part of the NATO-led team for the BI Peer Review process for Ukraine and contributed to three seminars. As for the Republic of Moldova, EU representatives took part in a BI event in Chisinau in November 2019.
- Cooperation continued in the area of strategic communications, including through the practice of coordinating briefing programmes and exchanging speakers for visitors to Brussels from Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Moldova, as well as through the participation of EU experts in a NATO strategic seminar designed for Moldovan high officials in October 2019. Moreover, EU and NATO staffs carried on their dialogue, exchange of information and coordination of messages in/on the Western Balkans, including

through regular contacts between EU StratCom Western Balkans Task Force and NATO StratCom Centre of Excellence in Riga and the European Centre of Excellence in Helsinki.

- Cooperation on CBRN issues in the field of external capacity building continued. NATO and the EU jointly organised a seminar in Jordan on CBRN capacity building in January 2020, with the participation of EU Member States and NATO Allies allowing the participants to better understand the potential of and necessity to continue exploring and building civ-mil synergies.
- On counter-terrorism, EU and NATO staffs regularly exchanged information on relevant capacity-building efforts in partner countries, in particular the Middle East and North Africa region and the Western Balkans, including through Security/Counter-Terrorism experts deployed in the EU Delegations in Tunisia, Algeria, Jordan and Mauritania. Furthermore, consultations between the European Security and Defence College and NATO took place in the context of the development of the NATO Counter-Terrorism Reference Curriculum, to which Tunisia, Mauritania and Jordan contributed with an expert.
- As regards the wider security and defence sector, the NATO Representation to Ukraine, the EUAM and the EU Delegation in Kyiv continued to closely coordinate their support to Ukraine, including on the implementation of its Law on National Security and through a donor coordination group, which the NATO Representation continued to chair under the auspices of the EU Delegation in Kyiv.
- Intensive cooperation continued in promoting the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ukraine. In Kyiv, EU staff regularly attended the NATO-hosted task force meetings on this topic.

As per established practice, the EU participated, as observer, in NATO meetings of National Points of Contact for Defence Capability Building initiative that took place in Brussels in June and October 2019 respectively.

Despite the above-mentioned achievements, there are further opportunities to improve practical EU-NATO cooperation with a view to maximising the impact of their respective efforts. Progress has been slower in identifying and initiating possible projects and/or activities, partly due to the different budget cycles, financial controls, timelines and planning procedures of the two Organisations.

The EUAM in Iraq and NATO Mission Iraq (NMI) developed a good level of regular coordination and de-confliction of activities which allowed avoiding duplication of efforts and developing greater synergies. In particular, the two missions identified a list of areas of collaboration and cooperation such as capacity building of security forces; human resources management; crisis management; governance; gender; WPS and international law including human rights. In particular, on the WPS agenda, the EU and NATO missions organised a first joint event on 'Inclusive Security' in August 2019. Furthermore, the EUAM participated in the International Gender Group organised by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in which the NMI, the Coalition, the United States and other international partners participate. In October 2019, the EU

and NATO missions agreed to enhance cooperation on gender mainstreaming, the WPS agenda, and human rights in the security sector, through a series of joint workshops to support the implementation of the next Iraqi National Action Plan.

EU and NATO staffs continued to consult and coordinate efforts in support of the Afghan Peace process and the future engagement of the international community in Afghanistan with the overriding aim to reach a sustainable peace and stability and to preserve the political and social achievements gained over the last 19 years.

Building on the positive results achieved in previous years, the well-established cooperation through EU and NATO Centres of Excellence and relevant Training Centres allowed for further enrichment of reciprocal knowledge, expertise and understanding, also for the benefit of partners. In particular, the following events can be highlighted: a) the colloquium on the “Challenges of unexploded munition” organised by the EU; b) the NATO Maritime Interdiction Operational Training Centre (NMIOTC) annual conference on “Countering Hybrid Threats: An Emerging Maritime Security Challenge”; and c) the annual “Conference on operational law” organised by the NATO Centre of Excellence for Confined and Shallow Waters.

Similarly, cooperation between the EU CBRN Centre of Excellence Initiative and the Joint CBRN Defence Centre of Excellence in Vyskov continued in the spirit of mutually beneficial engagement. In January 2020, EU and NATO staffs attended the fourth steering committee of the European Commission’s Battlefield Evidence Project, implemented by Interpol with the support of the NATO’s Stability Policing Centre of Excellence (SPCOE).

Strengthening political dialogue between EU and NATO

Political dialogue remains an indispensable element of NATO – EU cooperation. It is an essential tool for strengthening mutual understanding, building confidence and ensuring reciprocal transparency vis-à-vis all NATO Allies and EU Member States alike.

At the political level, the well-established practice of mutual invitations to relevant ministerial meetings continued apace. The EU High Representative participated in the regular meetings of NATO Ministers of Defence in June 2019, and in February 2020. The Secretary General of NATO attended the meeting of EU Foreign Ministers in January 2020 and the informal meeting of EU Ministers of Defence in Zagreb in March 2020. Furthermore, the Deputy Secretary General of NATO participated in the informal meeting of EU Ministers of Defence in August 2019 in Helsinki and in the EU Foreign Affairs Council (Defence) in November 2019, while the EEAS Secretary General attended the meeting of NATO Ministers of Defence in October 2019.

With a view to bolstering mutual transparency, the increased dynamic of high-level briefings continued. The NATO Deputy Secretary General and Assistant Secretaries General briefed the EU Political and Security Committee on several occasions regarding NATO’s current agenda and priorities, including on the NATO Leaders’ meeting in London, NATO Ministerial meetings, and other topical issues of common interest, such as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF)

Treaty. NATO Assistant Secretaries General also briefed the EDA Steering Board on different occasions as well as participated at the EDA Annual Conference in November 2019. Several high level meetings also took place between EDA and NATO leadership, including regular high level coordination between the EDA Chief Executive and NATO Assistant Secretaries General, as well as the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation. Respective briefings to the European Parliament and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly also continued in January and February 2020. In addition, several senior level informal meetings took place with the participation of non-EU NATO Allies and non-NATO EU Member states.

A previously agreed package of six North Atlantic Council (NAC) - **Political and Security Committee (PSC)** meetings was completed with an informal meeting in July 2019. A new package of three meetings was agreed, with one formal and one informal meetings having taken place in October 2019 and January 2020 respectively, while the second informal meeting is currently being planned.

NATO and EU representatives continued efforts to further engage with all NATO Allies and EU Member States through mutual cross-briefings. In this vein, the intensified dynamic of thematic cross-briefings continued, covering inter alia: maritime issues including Operation Sea Guardian, cyber defence, countering hybrid threats, China, Russia, Central Asia, Parallel and coordinated exercises, civil preparedness and resilience, CBRN and Small Arms and Light Weapons. This was complemented by the briefings of the Finnish and Croatian Presidencies of the Council of the EU to NATO Allies on their respective priorities. The positive trend is clearly reflected in a continued increase of cross-briefings throughout the reporting period. Since the signature of the Warsaw Joint Declaration in July 2016, more than 100 cross-briefings have been held in various EU and NATO committees and working groups. This well-established practice is set to continue in 2020 albeit with a temporarily reduced dynamic due to the coronavirus-related confinement restrictions.

EU and NATO staffs also continued dialogue within the framework of the implementation of the common set of proposals, including on counter-terrorism, military mobility, arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament, defence capability development, hybrid and cyber threats, disinformation and foreign interference, CBRN, maritime security, and gender-related issues in military operations. This was complemented by various seminars and workshops, such as by NATO and EU policy planners in December, focusing on transatlantic relations, Russia and Western Balkans.

Dialogue between the NATO and EU military staffs, including cross-invitations for the participation of each organization's Senior Military Authorities in respective Chief of Defence meetings was enhanced throughout the reporting period. The NATO and EU military staff Directors General held their bi-annual conferences in November 2019 and May 2020. The Directors General monitored and reported to their respective Military Committees on the implementation of the military related common proposals as well as on the state of play of staff interactions. Furthermore, an informal game plan was continually updated to monitor the state-of-play between the two staffs on mutually identified objectives and milestones within designated lines of development.

Close cooperation regarding WPS continued through regular dialogue between the two staffs and reciprocal participation at each organization's events, with a focus on sharing best practices and lessons learned. Collaboration deepened on developing early warning indicators and conflict analysis with an integrated gender perspective. NATO and EU Military Leadership discussed Gender in Military Operations during a Senior Leader Seminar in October and NATO briefed the EU's WPS Task Force on the importance of addressing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. Moreover, EUROPOL participated in a conference on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings organized by NATO and the Government of Montenegro in November 2019. Cooperation also continued under the Regional Acceleration of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) remains a topic of mutual interest for NATO and EU. Avenues of cooperation on this policy area are continuously being explored and the two staffs have established regular contact to brief each other on policy developments and training initiatives. In July 2019, EU Military Staff took part in a NATO training workshop on CAAC and in September 2019, the EU participated in a demonstration of a new NATO-UN immersive online training package on CAAC that is currently being finalized.

Regular briefings by the EU to NATO's Joint Health Group of the Civil Emergency Planning Committee also continued and proved particularly relevant in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak, including through sharing of information regarding Joint Procurement and various initiatives under the enhanced Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, EU and NATO have been closely coordinating their respective efforts in the overlapping areas of competence at the political and working level alike. The EU High Representative and the Secretary General of NATO informed each other on the respective organisations' engagements related to COVID-19 at the early stage of the crisis. Subsequently, they participated in respective Ministerial meetings via videoconferences in April and May and the Deputy Secretary General of NATO debriefed the EU PSC on relevant NATO working strands in April. Interaction at staff level continued to take place on a daily basis, including by establishing contacts between the recently created EEAS Task Force and NATO Crisis Management Task Force on COVID-19. EU representatives briefed NATO's Task Force on the EU's response, while the EU's Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) and NATO's Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) exchanged information on respective activities and responses. In parallel, cooperation between EU and NATO strategic communication teams intensified in response to heightened disinformation surrounding the pandemic.

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The implementation of the 74 common proposals remains an on-going and long-term process. It continues to require sustained commitment and concerted efforts from all stakeholders. Based on a pragmatic and flexible approach, EU and NATO staffs remain firmly committed to and engaged in taking this cooperation forward in a swift, fully coordinated and coherent way with a view to delivering further concrete results.