

Intervention by Baroness Patricia Scotland, UK Government Alternate, on ESDP at the 12 July Convention plenary

European Security and Defence Policy is the most recent addition to the EU's wide range of external instruments. It can play a vital role in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. The UK argued for an EU Security and Defence Policy because we believe in the need for the EU to be a capable and effective global actor.

To do that, the EU needs to have a crisis management capability.

By 2003, particularly with access to NATO assets, the EU should be capable of a significant range of military and civilian crisis management operations.

It has already become clear that the Union can play a major role in the Near Abroad. Both the first civilian crisis management operation and the potential first military crisis management operation have been identified in the Balkans - Bosnia and Macedonia respectively.

It is not surprising that our influence should be greater in our immediate geographical area and in those areas where EU leverage, e.g. the prospect of membership, provides the greatest clout. We should not be afraid to state that our immediate neighbourhood is our key area of concern. But if we can play a useful role further afield, then clearly it is right that the Union should extend its influence.

So I welcome the issues for consideration in the Praesidium paper.

In answer to the question "how can we best build a genuine ESDP, taking account of Member States' different approaches to defence and security issues", I would argue that the intergovernmental ESDP we are currently building is the best, indeed the only, way forward. As Peter Hain said at yesterday's meeting, CFSP has to be a product of all Member States and their Heads of Government.

As for "how can we best ensure a real improvement in capacity" the answer must surely lie firstly in resolving Berlin Plus, including all aspects of the EU/NATO relationship; secondly, making real improvements in capabilities so that we meet the Headline Goal military target and Gothenburg civilian targets; thirdly, scrupulous identification of our priorities; and fourthly, constant "lessons learned" exercises from each civilian and military crisis management operation we undertake.

The ESDP is a major undertaking for the EU. The Union's complexity - its range of economic, aid, trade, civilian and now military crisis management tools - is an opportunity, but also a challenge.

And we need to make sure that ESDP structures and capabilities are assembled and effective before considering new institutional evolutions.

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