

Intervention on Defence made by the Rt Hon Peter Hain,
Representative of the UK Government, at the Convention plenary
on 20 December 2002

Michel Barnier's thoughtful report indicates a way forward that has the potential to make a real difference to European Security and Defence Policy by supporting our common foreign and security policy objectives with military means.

This is a crucial time for the future of European Security and Defence Policy. With Berlin Plus in place, the EU is on the verge of taking on its first military operations. At the same time, we must grapple with increased threats and tight defence budgets. So we must focus our energies on areas where we can make a real difference.

This means strong support for increased co-operation on capabilities development as the Group report says. We can only back up our foreign policy and be a truly global force, if we have the physical means – the equipment and manpower. This means targeted financial commitment at a time when there are other calls on our resources. But by working together we can get more for our money. And that will offer a real security dividend.

As the report also says, we need to deal with the new threats, such as terrorism. I welcome the proposal for a solidarity clause that will allow member states to demonstrate their intention to support each other in times of crisis. The fight against terrorism is primarily a question of improved police, judicial and intelligence co-

operation. But there are ways in which the defence capabilities of EU member states can support this process.

But the limits of this commitment must also be clear - the EU shouldn't be in the business of setting out a territorial defence guarantee, or importing one by reinforced co-operation among some WEU member states. We should focus our energies and resources on the CFSP and ESDP challenges we face, not duplicate what NATO offers those Partners who wish to be part of a collective defence alliance.

And it is in the context of operations, that I have a concern about the description of the role of the High Representative. The High Representative should have a right of initiative and a stronger role in CFSP generally. Nice set out carefully his role – and that of the Council and PSC – in the vital business of conducting military operations where lives of EU nationals are at stake. But it is essential that member states – through the Political and Security Committee - retain control of the operations and that the military chain of command is respected.

After an historic week for ESDP, we now have the basis for the NATO-friendly European capability conceived at St Malo and taken forward by successive European Councils. ESDP requires three things: political will, institutions and military capabilities. This Convention's contribution, particularly its focus on new tasks and new capabilities, is a welcome boost to EU efforts.