

CONV 294/02

WG VIII 6

NOTE

from	Secretariat
to	Working Group VIII on Defence
Subject :	Summary of the meeting held on 23 September 2002

Outcome of Proceedings

1. Statement by Javier Solana, High Representative for the CFSP, followed by an exchange of views
 - The High Representative outlined the background to the creation of a European Security and Defence Policy. There had been consistent calls from the public for Europe to take more responsibility for its security and there was therefore a high level of support for ESDP. There was also a widespread demand from outside Europe for greater Union involvement in crisis management. The decision-making structures needed to make ESDP operational were now in place, and work was continuing on ensuring that the necessary military capabilities were available to the Union. He outlined the goal which the Union had set itself at Helsinki in 1999, noting that considerable progress had been made since then, but there were still areas where further efforts were required. In some cases this implied an increase in defence spending; it also implied more work on improving cooperation in the field of armaments. Finalising the arrangements for access to NATO assets and capabilities was also an important outstanding objective. As far as the Convention was concerned, it was important that, whilst taking into account the different situations and sensitivities of the Member States, any new proposals should leave the way open for the future.
 - In discussion, a number of members of the Working Group questioned the High Representative on how to make further concrete progress on capabilities, and what options were available to allow for a further strengthening of cooperation within ESDP. Several underlined that the future of ESDP depended above all on political will. The importance of ensuring compatibility with NATO was underlined, as well of securing an agreement allowing access to NATO assets. Questions were raised about the future role of candidate countries in ESDP, about the role of the Commission, and on the differences of attitude within national parliaments.

- The High Representative agreed that progress depended on securing sufficient political will. But public opinion was broadly supportive, and there was a need to respond to this. Consideration might be given to providing ESDP in the future with sufficient operational flexibility, allowing for example action within the framework of a coalition of the willing. On capabilities, cooperation on armaments would lead to greater cost-effectiveness in the long-term, although Member States had to be ready in the meantime to consider increases in defence spending. The main objective was to adapt Europe's armed forces (which had until recently been designed for the purpose of collective defence) to allow them to be deployed outside their area; this implied developing sufficient new capabilities, particularly in the areas of transport, communications and logistical support. The candidate countries also needed to adapt, and in some cases to reduce the number of men under arms, although this too had cost implications in the short-term. The relationship with NATO was important, and efforts would continue to resolve the outstanding issues on access to NATO capabilities. But NATO's responsibility for collective defence remained separate and distinct from that of the EU. Crisis management included also civilian instruments, and the Commission therefore had an important role to play as provider of some of these instruments.

2. European defence effort: military capabilities required to achieve objectives.

General Schuwirth, Director-General of the EU military staff, presented to the Working Group an outline of progress in ESDP to date, covering structures, concepts, and more specifically, capabilities. The work on capabilities was necessarily based so far on generic scenarios in the absence of concrete operational requirements. The process of realising the headline goals had led so far to confirmation that the capabilities existed, but that there were a number of shortfalls. Some of these shortfalls arose because existing capabilities had not been offered; others were real shortfalls which needed to be addressed. There were some initiatives already underway, notably the Airbus project for heavy lift transport aircraft. Further efforts were needed in particular on cooperation in R and D and procurement. Examples of the importance of common solutions included mid-air refuelling and communications systems. As far as the EU-NATO relationship was concerned, it was important to note that the capabilities for each were essentially drawn from the same forces. The interest in common approaches was therefore the same.

In discussion, the issue of establishing criteria for participating in closer security cooperation was raised. The issues of scenarios (Petersberg or beyond) was also covered, as was the issue of the types of troops (conscripted or not). General Schuwirth underlined that criteria would need to be looked at in terms of effectiveness of expenditure. Possible scenarios within the scope of the Headline goal currently included everything except collective defence. On the issue of conscript troops, the main issue was the basis on which they were selected for real operations.

The Chairman concluded that the meeting had been a useful opportunity for the group to address a number of important issues specifically related to capabilities, in particular how to secure the necessary political commitment, possible criteria for participation in future cooperative efforts, and the scope of tasks under ESDP.

3. Other Business

The Chairman announced that the next meeting would take place on 4 October, and would be devoted to the issue of armaments. A number of experts had been invited to introduce the discussion.
