

SUMMARY

from Secretariat

to Working Group VIII on Defence

Subject : Summary of the meeting held on 29 October 2002

Outcome of Proceedings

1. Exchange of views on the scope of ESDP

[NB: the summary record on this point includes the continuation of the discussion which took place at the subsequent meeting of the Working Group on 4 November]

- The Chairman opened the discussion by referring to the changing security environment and the need to reflect on how this might affect the scope of ESDP, and in particular whether the existing 'Petersberg tasks' needed to be looked at again. The issue of collective defence, whilst sensitive, also deserved further reflection. He suggested that the discussion be based on the questions set out in the introductory document which had been circulated to all members (Working Document 10).
- A number of speakers highlighted the emergence of new threats, in particular that of terrorism after the 11 September attacks against the US. For some, this pointed to the development of new capabilities such as in the area of intelligence sharing. As far as the Petersberg tasks were concerned, some considered that there was no need for them to be amended, and that they were already sufficiently flexible. Others considered that they should be adapted/modernised to take account of the changing threats; the objectives of stabilisation as well as defence outreach (training etc) were mentioned. However a number of those who wished to see the tasks amended also called for maintaining a certain flexibility of interpretation, and several called for any future Treaty language to be 'open'.
- Several members of the group agreed that provisions should be introduced to allow the resources developed under ESDP to be put at the disposal of the Member States in the event that they be required within the EU, in particular in the area of civil protection.

- On the issue of a solidarity commitment, there was a clear difference of views within the group. Several suggested that it would be useful to have some sort of commitment, which in any case reflected the existing general commitments to solidarity in the Treaty. Some recognised that not all Member States would be able to sign up to such a commitment and that it would therefore have to include either an 'opt-in' or 'opt-out' provision. Some suggested that any such provision would depend in part on the future of the collective defence guarantee within WEU (Article V). Others said that they would not wish to see any form of collective commitment. Some argued that it would be politically unacceptable; others preferred not to include anything which might undermine existing commitments such as that within NATO. One speaker argued that any military action should be on the basis of a UN mandate. Several speakers questioned why part II of the draft outline Constitutional Treaty contained a separate heading for defence, since ESDP was an integral part of CFSP and should not be separated from it.
- There was a general agreement that the new threats posed a particular challenge as far as generating a coordinated response involving a wide range of instruments was concerned. There was a need for recourse to less traditional capabilities (such as gendarmerie-type military forces) as well as other 'third pillar' instruments.
- The chairman concluded that there was general consensus on the need to recognise and respond to new security threats. Whilst some members of the group were cautious about how to respond to these threats, others considered that they should be taken into account in a modernisation of the Petersberg tasks. The group was open to looking further into the issue of the use of ESDP structures to assist in the event of a terrorist attack within the EU. There was clearly a difference of views on the issue of a possible solidarity commitment. The chairman also recalled that further reflection would be needed on the issue of the role of the High Representative, and a possible Deputy for defence.

2. Hearing of Lord Robertson, NATO Secretary-General, followed by an exchange of views.

- Lord Robertson outlined the recent developments in NATO in response to the changing nature of the threat, coupled with its substantial enlargement. He underlined the importance of the EU and NATO working together. The fact that the final link on cooperation (Berlin +) had not yet been put in place was regrettable. NATO remained fully behind the ESDP initiative, but it was important that the EU avoided creating expectations which could not subsequently be fulfilled. Emphasis had to be placed in particular on developing adequate capabilities.
- Lord Robertson said that EU/NATO cooperation worked better in practice than in theory, as recent experience in FYROM had demonstrated. But neither side could afford to base this cooperation on ad hoc solutions. Short-term fixes, such as some were calling for in order to allow Operation Amber Fox to be taken over by the EU, were not the answer.

- In general the public expected a high level of cooperation between the two organisations. Competition was wasteful and unnecessary. There was therefore no good reason for the EU to attempt to duplicate NATO's planning capability. It had rather to concentrate on delivering additional capabilities.
- In discussion, the issues of EU/NATO collective defence was raised. Several asked about the future of NATO's relationship with Russia and of the Partnership for Peace initiative. The compatibility of the new NATO initiative for a Rapid Reaction Force was also raised. Some members of the group addressed the issue of the technology gap with the US. Lord Robertson stressed that collective defence in Europe was essentially addressed through the NATO Article V guarantee. The objectives of the Petersberg tasks, and idea of a NATO Rapid Reaction Force were complementary but different, although the pool of forces from European members of NATO was the same. As far as the technology gap was concerned, Europe's difficulties were threefold: insufficient expenditure, lack of some of the most basic capabilities, and the US strategic rethink. Counter-terrorism required 'smart' soldiers, and recourse also to civilian capabilities. Europe suffered from the fact that only 3% of its huge numbers of men under arms were readily available in a crisis.

3. Other Business

The Chairman announced that the next meeting would take place on 4 November, and would be devoted to the issue of flexibility and diversity. Mr Alain Richard, former French Defence minister had been invited to introduce the discussion.
