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Subject: Council Conclusions on EU Security and Defence

Delegations will find attached the Council Conclusions on EU Security and Defence, as approved by the Council at its meeting held on 27 May 2024.

Council Conclusions on EU Security and Defence**Introduction**

1. The EU faces an unprecedented combination of threats and challenges that are often interlinked. The rules-based international order is increasingly being challenged by revisionist powers and authoritarian regimes while international tensions are on the rise. War has returned to Europe. Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, a gross violation of international law, poses an existential threat to European security. Hamas' brutal terrorist attacks against Israel and the ensuing war in Gaza have led to a grave humanitarian catastrophe and increased tensions in the Middle East. In this regard, the Council recalls the conclusions of the European Council of April 2024 and remains fully committed to reaching an immediate ceasefire, the unconditional release of all hostages, as well as providing unhindered access to humanitarian aid at scale for Palestinians in need. The EU remains firmly committed to a lasting and sustainable peace based on the two-state solution. Following military coups and a growing interference of our strategic competitors in the Sahel, the EU is adapting its role as a security provider and its civilian and military presence in the region. Other crises and fragile contexts, often with a devastating humanitarian impact, will require continued engagement – for example in the Western Balkans, Eastern Neighbourhood, Black Sea Region, South Caucasus, Southern Neighbourhood, the Horn of Africa, and the Gulf of Guinea.

2. Since the start of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 and based on the Strategic Compass, as well as the Versailles Declaration in March 2022, the EU's role as a security and defence actor has been significantly strengthened. The Council welcomes the progress made as reflected in the High Representative's Annual Progress Report on the implementation of the Strategic Compass of March 2024 and looks forward to the revision of the Threat Analysis in 2025. The EU needs to further increase its defence readiness and enhance its sovereignty through additional efforts in accordance with the European Council conclusions of 21 and 22 March 2024 and Member States' competences. It also needs to enhance its civilian and military preparedness in light of the evolving threat landscape. The EU needs to furthermore increase efforts to prevent and respond faster to crises in an integrated manner, together with partners whenever possible, to sustain peace and strengthen the rule of law. Without prejudice to the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States and while taking into account the security and defence interests of all Member States, the Council today agrees on the following five main priorities for the coming period, also with a view to the next Strategic Agenda:

EU's unwavering support to Ukraine

Security commitments

3. The Council recalls that the EU is ever more steadfast in its support to Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. In this regard, the EU and its Member States are determined to continue providing Ukraine and its people with all the necessary political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military, and diplomatic support for as long as it takes and as intensely as needed. In this regard, the Council aims for signature of the EU's security commitments to Ukraine by the end of June. Together with bilateral arrangements, they will help Ukraine to defend itself, resist destabilisation efforts, and deter acts of aggression in the future. EU security commitments will form a framework for predictable, long term, and sustainable support for Ukraine's security and defence, and should be considered in a holistic manner. The Council also stresses the need for a strategic approach to the Black Sea region.

4. The recently established Ukraine Assistance Fund (UAF), as part of the European Peace Facility (EPF), will continue to be driven by the urgency and evolving needs of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. The Council welcomes the progress on the additional legal acts with a view to the implementation of the Ukraine Assistance Fund and other assistance measures under the EPF, in accordance with implementing rules of the Facility. The Council also welcomes the progress on the draft legal acts on directing extraordinary revenues stemming from Russia's immobilised assets for the benefit of Ukraine, particularly with a view to addressing its most immediate military needs, notably through the EPF.

Ammunition and air defence

5. Furthermore, the Council stresses the critical importance of accelerated and intensified deliveries of military materiel based on Ukraine's urgent needs, notably ammunition, particularly for artillery, missiles, air defence and artillery systems, and drones, while continuing to address medium to long-term Ukraine's needs. It welcomes Member States' recent initiatives in this regard and will continue to incentivise further deliveries. The Council calls on Member States to also make further use of the European Defence Agency (EDA) and 'lead nations' Framework Contracts to urgently deliver more ammunition and missiles to Ukraine.

6. The Council welcomes the outstanding work of the EU Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM) which will have trained 60,000 Ukrainian soldiers by the end of summer 2024. The Mission will continue responding to the evolving and urgent needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, in coordination with partners. In this regard, the Council welcomes the widening of the scope of the training to the maritime and air domains and stresses the importance of continuing to focus on the quality of the training for Ukrainian soldiers and their contribution to delivering operational effect. The Council looks forward to the upcoming Strategic Review of the Mission, in particular with a view to continuing war related urgent needs and mid- to long-term needs such as Ukraine's defence sector reform. The Council also welcomes the strengthening of the European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM) in Ukraine which will allow the scaling up of support for Ukrainian law enforcement agencies in Ukraine's liberated and adjacent territories and for relevant civilian security sector reforms, also in the context of its EU accession process, as well as the investigation and prosecution of international crimes committed by Russia.

Spending more and better together

7. The return of high intensity warfare on the European continent requires us to ensure, urgently and at scale, the availability of defence products. The European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) must be able to provide for the needs of the Member States's armed forces as well as for partners where necessary. While increasing its production capacity and readiness, the EDTIB, including its constituent SMEs and mid-caps, needs to be able to develop next-generation, cutting-edge capabilities and be at the forefront of technological innovation, and competition in a diverse landscape, using the EDA as a platform for information sharing and coordination of Member States' positions.

The revised Capability Development Priorities agreed in November 2023 address the most needed and most urgent full-spectrum capabilities. The Council stresses that these priorities serve as the key reference for all EU defence initiatives and defence-related policies and instruments supporting collaborative planning and programming at national and EU level. The Council also welcomes the work undertaken by the EDA's Hub for European Defence Innovation in synergy with the European Commission's EU Defence Innovation Scheme. The Council also welcomes the EDA's 2024 Long Term Review, building on the guidance the Council on 14 November 2023, and calls for its full implementation. In this context, it underlines the political impetus contained therein reiterating the role of the EDA within the European capability landscape.

In line with the Strategic Compass, the Council recalls the will to enhance the EU's strategic autonomy and ability to work with partners to safeguard its values and interests. A stronger and more capable EU in the field of security and defence will contribute positively to global and transatlantic security and is complementary to NATO, which remains the foundation of collective defence for its members. In this respect, the Council recalls the guiding principles set out in the Treaties and those agreed by the European Council.

European Defence Industrial Strategy

8. The Council welcomes the presentation of the Joint Communication of the European Commission and the High Representative on a new European Defence Industrial Strategy and calls on all work on it to be taken forward in coordination with Member States. The accompanying European Defence Industry Programme proposed by the Commission is a major step towards implementation of the Strategy and the ongoing negotiations on this instrument should continue swiftly. Both should offer ways towards increased EU defence readiness, while they will complement, and be in full coherence with, existing EU defence tools, instruments, structures, and initiatives, avoiding unnecessary duplication.

9. Increasing EU defence readiness and enhancing the Union's sovereignty will require additional efforts, in accordance with Member States' competences. The Council agrees on the need for a strong EDTIB and for investing more, better, and together as essential pre-requisites. To that effect, the Council:
- recalls the shared commitment to substantially increase defence expenditures and invest better and faster together, implementing the European Council conclusions of March 2024, and urges enhanced efforts to invest throughout the capability life cycle and based on capability development priorities agreed by Member States;
 - acknowledges the need for increasing and securing the timely availability of defence products by developing a more responsive and resilient EDTIB across the Union that is able to ensure security of supply, taking into account existing measures of Member States, and, building on the Versailles Declaration and the Strategic Compass, is committed to reducing strategic dependencies;
 - recalls that the EDTIB needs significant, sustained investments from the Member States and, without prejudging the next Multiannual Financial Framework, the Union, to underpin the EU's defence readiness;

- underlines the importance of adequate and consistent financing for the EU’s defence readiness;
- stresses the need to improve access to public and private finance for the EDTIB. This applies especially to SMEs. It also underscores that the sustainable finance framework does not impede financing the defence sector and recognises that the defence industry can also bring substantial economic benefits and jobs and stimulate innovation. The Council notes the important signalling function of the European Investment Bank (EIB) Group’s policies and it recalls the invite of the European Council Conclusions of March 2024 to adapt its policy for lending to the defence industry and its current definition of dual-use goods, while safeguarding its financing capacity;
- recalls the invitation by the European Council of March 2024 to explore all options for mobilising funding and report back by June.

10. The Council agrees that the EU's ambition to achieve defence readiness should also be leveraged through partnerships. It supports the strengthening of the cooperation, leading to progressive integration of the Ukrainian defence technological and industrial base into the EDTIB. In this regard, the Council welcomes the first EU-Ukraine Defence Industries Forum held in Brussels on 6 May 2024, and looks forward to the opening of an innovation office in Kyiv. Likewise, the Council encourages the EDA to explore the possible revision of its administrative arrangement with the Ukrainian ministry of defence, as soon as conditions allow. Furthermore, the Council calls for taking forward cooperation with NATO on defence industry matters in a mutually beneficial manner, in particular by enhancing the cooperation on the implementation of standards.

Permanent structured cooperation

11. The Permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) is a central framework to deepen defence cooperation amongst participating Member States at EU level, enhancing operational readiness and interoperability, defence spending and investment, capability development, and the contribution of their armed forces to the most demanding missions, as well as helping to build a common strategic culture. The ongoing PESCO strategic review, addressing both the more binding commitments and the collaborative projects, should result in a stronger and more strategic and effective PESCO beyond 2025, reflecting the deteriorating security environment and contributing to EU's defence readiness. Keeping up the ambition, ensuring political ownership and enhancing strategic communication, focusing our efforts on projects addressing strategically relevant capability gaps, and consolidating the coherence with EU defence initiatives and defence-related policies and instruments will allow PESCO to better respond to operational and capability needs. This will help the participating Member States to enhance their defence cooperation and better act together in both the short and long term.

Increase the EU's ability to act

Red Sea / Gulf region

12. The Council welcomes the launch of EUNAVFOR ASPIDES, a defensive maritime security operation with a robust mandate to contribute to safeguarding international law, restoring freedom of navigation, and protecting merchant shipping and its sailors in the Bab al-Mandab Strait and the Strait of Hormuz, as well as international waters in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Oman, and the Persian Gulf, in coordination with other maritime security actors, notably EUNAVFOR ATALANTA, EMASoH-Agenor, and Operation Prosperity Guardian. It welcomes the first operational results of EUNAVFOR ASPIDES and calls upon Member States to ensure sufficient and sustained force generation. It stresses the importance of a continued and strengthened strategic communication towards regional actors and of an optimal coordination of Member States' actions to de-escalate conflicts and sustainably ensure the security and freedom of navigation in the area of operation.

13. For more than a decade, the EU has invested significant resources and deployed civilian and military personnel in the Sahel region. Recent changes in the political and security situation have affected our CSDP engagement. Despite these challenges, the Council emphasises that the security and stability of the Sahel remains a long-term priority for the EU. It stresses the importance to adapt our CSDP engagement, in the context of a regional approach, to be more flexible and modular as well as to provide more tailored and demand-driven support based on local needs and requests as well as ownership and accountability. The Council welcomes the recently established civilian-military EU Security and Defence Initiative in support of West African countries of the Gulf of Guinea, which aims to tackle the spill-over effects from the Sahel. The Council emphasises the importance of jointly creating the conditions for long-term peace and stability including through building local political ownership in the region.

14. The Council welcomes the important work of all civilian and military CSDP missions and operations in various parts of the world. The EU's strength in preventing and addressing external conflicts and crises lies in its ability to use both military and civilian means in a joined-up manner. The Council stresses the strategic importance of the Western Balkans region for European stability, reaffirms the importance of strengthening ties with the region based on shared values, principles, and alignment with the CFSP, and reiterates its readiness to address internal and external security challenges in the region. It recognises EUFOR Althea's contribution to the safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the region, as well as the stabilising activities of EULEX Kosovo. The Council reaffirms its commitment to continue supporting the return of stability and security in Iraq, through EUAM Iraq, and in Libya, through EUBAM Libya and Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI, including its core task to contribute to the implementation of the UN arms embargo on Libya, as well as its secondary tasks. It also underlines the contribution of EUNAVFOR MED IRINI to the disruption of the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks through information gathering. It underscores that EUPOL COPPS and EUBAM Rafah shall continue to play an important role in building the institutional capacity of the Palestinian Authority, particularly as regards the civilian police, justice, and border management, as part of the broader overall political commitment to the two-state solution and the viability of a future Palestinian state to which the EU remains firmly committed.

The Council also stresses the need for flexibility to adapt, as required, the two missions to meet future political and security needs. The Council welcomes the strengthened CSDP contribution to peace and security in Mozambique, through EUTM Mozambique, and in the Horn of Africa, through EUCAP Somalia, EUTM Somalia, and EUNAVFOR ATALANTA commending its contribution to deter piracy and protect the World Food Programme and other vulnerable shipping. The Council reiterates the EU's commitment to effectively mobilise the full range of its tools and policies in the region, ensuring the full ownership of partners.

15. The Council acknowledges the increasing importance of all civilian CSDP missions in today's geostrategic environment as a unique political and operational tool for the EU to support host countries in its neighbourhood and beyond, and underlines the need to strengthen their capabilities and human resources. The Council particularly emphasises the swift launch of the EU Mission in Armenia and the EU Partnership Mission in the Republic of Moldova in 2023, both adaptable to the respective security situations and threats, and the growing needs of host countries and their population. The Council underscores the continuous important work of EUMM Georgia, which remains a key stabilising factor in the country.

16. The Council reiterates the key importance of the EPF as a global instrument in support of our CFSP/CSDP objectives, allowing for targeted military and defence assistance in response to the needs of partner countries.
17. The Council welcomes the adoption of the European Union's Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Due Diligence Policy on security sector support to third parties (EU HRDDP) and calls for its swift and full implementation by all concerned actors. The Council urges to increase efforts to deliver on the Women, Peace and Security objectives and welcomes the renewed commitment to promote the Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) agenda, including the revision of the checklist for integrating CAAC in CSDP missions and operations.
18. The Council welcomes ongoing efforts to operationalise the 2022 EU Stabilisation concept, drawing on all relevant tools and instruments, from the EEAS, Commission services, and Member States in line with the integrated approach to external conflicts and crises.

19. The Council stresses the importance of fully operationalising the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC) by 2025. It calls for Member States' continuous contributions of their forces and capabilities to this end. It approves today the two remaining generic operational scenarios (peace enforcement, conflict prevention/capacity building). The Council notes that, once the subsequent contingency planning documents are developed, the EU will be equipped with five key scenarios to conduct continued advance planning to enable the EU to act effectively and more rapidly. Advance planning will also inform the requirements for the EU RDC and facilitate political decisions when a crisis arises. It stresses the particular importance of regular live exercises related to the EU RDC to enhance its operational readiness and interoperability. In this regard, it welcomes the first EU military live exercise in Spain in 2023, looks forward to the next live exercise in Germany in November/December 2024, and stresses the importance of continued exercise activities in 2025 and onwards. It also recalls the commitment to expand and extend the scope of common costs for EU military missions and operations, exercises, and the EU RDC, and looks forward to its operationalisation as soon as possible.

20. The Council invites Member States and the EEAS, to further work on reaching the full operational capability of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) by 2025, in particular by reinforcing its secure communication and information systems and providing the necessary personnel and funding, to enable the MPCC to plan and conduct complex multi-domain operations, including in non-permissive environments. It recalls that, once the MPCC is fully operational, it should be seen as the preferred command and control structure for military missions, operations, exercises, and the EU RDC. With regard to civilian CSDP, the Council recalls the importance to progress on the organisational reform of the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) and commits to strengthening and developing the CPCC into the Civilian Operations Headquarters.

21. The Council reiterates the importance of military mobility for European security and defence, including a well-functioning network. It calls on the Member States to implement as a matter of urgency the Military Mobility Pledge set out in an annex to these conclusions. In this context, the Council agrees to speed up the movement of large-scale military forces at short-notice within and beyond the Union through coherent national commitments in complementarity with the EU Action Plan on Military Mobility 2.0¹. The Council also remains committed to further strengthening the mutually beneficial partnership between the EU and NATO in the field of military mobility, in the framework of the three Joint Declarations of 2016, 2018, and 2023, in full respect of the agreed guiding principles as well as the decision-making autonomy of both organisations, and taking into account a 360-degree approach. The Council also acknowledges that strengthening military mobility requires adequate resources, investment, and efforts both at national and EU levels, in full respect of the sovereignty of Member States and without pre-empting future negotiations of the next multi-annual financial framework. The Council invites the EEAS, together with relevant Commission services, the EDA, and PESCO projects, to coordinate the regular stocktaking of progress made, with a view to the full and comprehensive implementation of the Military Mobility Pledge by 2026.

¹ 15047/22.

Mutual assistance and solidarity

22. The Council recalls the EU's determination to show mutual assistance and solidarity in case of aggression against one of the Member States. It reiterates that the EU will continue to invest in its mutual assistance under Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union as well as solidarity under Article 222 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in particular through frequent exercises. This shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States. Commitments and cooperation in this area shall be consistent with commitments under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which, for those States which are members of it, remains the foundation of their collective defence and the forum for its implementation.

Civilian CSDP

23. The Council welcomes the steps taken to enhance the effectiveness of civilian CSDP through the implementation of the Civilian CSDP Compact 2023-2027² and looks forward to guiding principles for civilian CSDP by the end of 2024. It encourages Member States to speed up their efforts to jointly increase the number of seconded experts to civilian CSDP missions, including by enhancing women's participation in civilian CSDP. It welcomes the first Annual Civilian Capabilities Conference and the first Human Resources Capacity Generation Conference, both held in April 2024, and looks forward to setting an ambitious goal for the development of capabilities in the second half of 2024 as part of the Civilian Capability Development Process. The Council reiterates the need for regular discussions on civilian CSDP at the Foreign Affairs Council.

² 9588/23.

Strengthen the EU's resilience and secure access to strategic domains

Cyber and Hybrid threats, foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI)

24. The Council reiterates the importance of strengthening our prevention, detection, deterrence, resilience, and response to hybrid, FIMI, cyber threats, and malicious activities targeting the EU, its Member States, and partners with the further development of dedicated instruments. In this regard, the Council welcomes the revised implementing guidelines of the Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox³, and the further operationalisation of the EU Hybrid Toolbox and the EU toolbox to counter foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI toolbox). It calls for further streamlining and developing of these toolboxes and encourages Member States and relevant EU actors to leverage the full potential of the existing instruments and expertise, including where necessary by complementing existing restrictive measures regimes and developing new restrictive measures to address hybrid activities and FIMI. In order to ensure intelligence-based situational awareness and strategic foresight, the Council reiterates that by 2025 the EU Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity needs to be further strengthened by enhancing its resources and capacities.

³ 10289/23.

25. The Council emphasises the need to further strengthen the EU's capacity to address malign behaviour, in particular in view of upcoming European elections, and calls upon the High Representative and Commission, in coordination with the Member States, to advance a full-spectrum approach to resilience, response, conflict prevention, cooperation, and stability in cyberspace including, where appropriate, proactive protective measures. In this context, the Council calls on the High Representative to present a concept and roadmap by the end of 2024 for the establishment of an EU Cyber Defence Coordination Centre (EUCDCC) in 2025 to enhance coordination and cooperation in the domain of cyber defence and to explore the inclusion of the information environment and electronic warfare into its scope. The Council welcomes the work of related PESCO projects in this regard.

Furthermore, the Council welcomes and encourages close coordination with like-minded partners to promote exchange of information and best practice on monitoring, evaluating, and countering FIMI threats, including in the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism. The Council welcomes the progress made in equipping CSDP missions and operations with dedicated instruments from the FIMI toolbox, as this will significantly enhance their resilience and effectiveness in countering FIMI threats, and emphasises the importance of strong strategic communications. The establishment of the FIMI Information Sharing and Analysis Centre (ISAC) is a significant step towards enhancing information sharing and cooperation with and among civil society and other like-minded partners.

26. The Council welcomes the agreement on the Guiding framework for the practical establishment of the Hybrid Rapid Response Teams. By mobilising relevant expertise at EU level and at short notice when needed, the teams will constitute an important instrument in the EU Hybrid Toolbox to support the Member States, partner countries, and CSDP missions and operations in enhancing their resilience to and countering hybrid threats. The Council calls upon the High Representative and the Commission, in close cooperation with Member States, to make the teams fully operational.

27. The Council recalls that space systems and services are crucial for the functioning of our society, economy, and our security and defence. It calls upon the High Representative and the Commission to rapidly implement the Space Strategy for Security and Defence in close coordination with the Member States. The Council welcomes the delivery of the first yearly classified space threat landscape analysis as well as the Space Threat Response exercise in March. It emphasises the need to further improve the EU's Response to space threats and, to this end, invites the High Representative to submit to the Council a review of the Council Decision on the security of systems and services under the Union Space Programme(s), as well as a proposal to amend it to better address the new space threat landscape. This will ensure that relevant EU tools can be mobilised in a timely and coordinated way when confronted with a space threat which may affect the security and defence of the Union. At the same time, the EU will step up efforts to work with partners to promote the setting of norms of responsible behaviour in space in the UN-context across the full range of space activities, thus contributing significantly to promoting security in outer space, as well as to safeguarding the stable, safe, and sustainable use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

While recalling that Space Domain Awareness is a sovereign prerogative, the Council welcomes the efforts by relevant Member States to share information with the EU in this field. It encourages the collaborative development of additional dedicated capabilities required for Member States' Space Domain Awareness and reiterates its support for reinforcing EU Space Surveillance and Tracking capabilities. The Council also underlines the instrumental role of the EU SatCen in supporting the autonomous decision making of the EU and its Member States and welcomes the ongoing efforts by the High Representative and the Member States to strengthen EU SatCen to boost our autonomous geospatial intelligence capacity, as stated in the Strategic Compass. It also welcomes the ongoing assessment of possible options for developing a potential new EU earth observation governmental service that would take into account existing and planned capabilities and initiatives and respond to identified needs, building on the expertise and complementarity between the EU SatCen as well as the EU Space Programme Agency. The Council further emphasises the importance of secure communications and satellite navigation systems in support of both defence and civilian domains.

Maritime

28. The EU is further consolidating its position as a stronger maritime security actor in line with the revised EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) and its Action Plan⁴. Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP) enable a greater European maritime presence and outreach in the Gulf of Guinea as well as in the North-western Indian Ocean, contribute to maritime security with shared awareness, analysis, and information, and promote international law, in particular UNCLOS. The Council welcomes the progress made in the implementation of the CMP concept, invites the EEAS to swiftly put forward proposals for its further improvement, and agrees to the extension of their mandate until spring 2026 for CMP Gulf of Guinea and until spring 2025 for CMP North-western Indian Ocean. The Council encourages the High Representative and Member States to continue organising maritime security exercises including annual exercises of Member States' navies and coast guards. It welcomes the participation of Member States and EU agencies in the maritime security exercise MARSEC, organised by Spain in May 2024.

Air

29. The air domain is becoming increasingly congested and contested. In this regard, the Council welcomes the strategic reflection to ensure a free, safe and secure European access to airspace, conducted in line with the Strategic Compass. It looks forward to a proposal for a dedicated EU airspace strategy for security and defence with a view to its adoption in 2025.

⁴ 14280/23.

30. The Council calls for the swift implementation of the joint communication on the climate and security nexus⁵. This includes notably the development of early warning and foresight capabilities, setting up the Climate and Defence Support Mechanism, the deployment of environmental advisors to all CSDP missions and operations by 2025, and a full operationalisation of the dedicated EU Training Platform. The Council invites the EEAS, together with the Commission, to report as soon as possible on the progress made. The Council urges to make best use of EU defence capability tools and instruments to support the green transition. It welcomes the efforts made by the Member States to develop national strategies to prepare their armed forces for climate change and recognises the EU Climate and Defence Network as a reference platform for sharing best practises and exploring collaborative opportunities. Furthermore, in light of the impact and risks generated by climate change and environmental degradation, the Council recognises the need for adequate climate adaptation and mitigation action among the armed forces. The Council acknowledges that improved energy efficiency and sustainability reduces the carbon footprint, costs, as well as logistical burden, while enhancing the operational effectiveness. It welcomes the ongoing efforts of the EU Consultation Forum for Sustainable Energy in the Defence and Security Sector in this context.

⁵ 11283/23.

Partner up

31. Partnerships on peace, security, and defence are an indispensable pillar of the EU's efforts to promote peace and security around the world. The EU is fully committed to promoting international cooperation, upholding the rules-based international order and strengthening effective multilateralism at all levels, with the United Nations at its core. The EU will continue to further strengthen, deepen, and expand tailored and mutually beneficial partnerships with bilateral and multilateral partners based on shared values and interests, in line with the Strategic Compass and established procedures.
32. The Council also welcomes the continued strengthening of the EU-UN strategic partnership on peace operations and crisis management and the implementation of the joint priorities for 2022-2024⁶. The upcoming UN Summit of the Future constitutes a unique opportunity to reinvigorate the multilateral system and make the UN fit for the future and also more representative of today's world and societies, reducing the trust gap vis-à-vis institutions and among UN members. The Council supports the UN Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace and looks forward to seeing its recommendations to enhance our collective peace and security system to better prevent, manage and resolve conflicts in both traditional and new domains reflected in the Pact for the Future. It welcomes work to continue developing the UN-EU Strategic Partnership on peace and security to adapt it to the new geopolitical reality, including with a view to adopting a new set of priorities for 2025-2027.

⁶ 5451/22.

33. The Council reiterates that the EU's strategic partnership with NATO underpinned by the strong transatlantic bond is essential for Euro-Atlantic security and stability, as demonstrated again in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The Council remains fully committed to further strengthening, deepening, and expanding this mutually beneficial partnership, through political dialogue and cooperation in the framework of the three Joint Declarations of 2016, 2018, and 2023, and in full respect of the agreed guiding principles of transparency, reciprocity and inclusiveness as well as the decision-making autonomy and procedures of both organisations. The Council welcomes the significant progress achieved across the board, including on political dialogue, countering hybrid threats, cyber security and defence, FIMI, resilience, military mobility, exercises, crisis management operations, space, climate and defence, emerging and disruptive technologies, women, peace and security, and capacity building for partners.

34. With a view to taking the EU-NATO partnership to the next level, the Council emphasises the need to update the common set of proposals and develop and adopt a new, comprehensive, and forward-looking implementation document encompassing the full spectrum of EU-NATO cooperation before the end of 2024. In light of increased defence cooperation, growing coherence of output between the respective defence planning and capability development processes, joint procurement, and European defence industrial investments, the Council calls for an increased level of cooperation, coordination, and unimpeded exchange of information in an inclusive and non-discriminatory manner through secure communication systems, including classified information at staff level. It stresses in this regard the need to allow for classified information exchange at staff level between the EDA and NATO, including the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA) and the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA). The Council invites the EDA to keep Member States regularly informed on the progress ahead of the conclusion of such an arrangement. The Council looks forward to the forthcoming ninth progress report on the common set of proposals to be submitted jointly by the High Representative and the NATO Secretary-General.

35. The Council welcomes the EU's engagement on conflict prevention and peace mediation, an essential aspect of the EU's global role to promote peace and security. In this regard, it calls for ambitious strengthening of the EU's toolbox including through cooperation with the United Nations and other multilateral partners to work together in areas of joint interest as effective multilateralism must remain the keystone for peace and security cooperation. In particular, the Council looks forward to the development of a joint dedicated EU-OSCE Roadmap on conflict prevention and crisis management, in line with the Strategic Compass.

The Council acknowledges that it is crucial for the EU to develop an even closer and more ambitious partnership for peace, security, governance, and development with Africa, based on mutually beneficial agendas, lessons-learned, a joint deeper reflection with African partners on local and regional needs and challenges, and tailor-made, gradual, and modular solutions.

The Council underlines that the security of the Middle East and North Africa and Europe are deeply inter-twined and calls for strengthened cooperation on security and defence with regional partners, including the Gulf Cooperation Council.

36. The Council reiterates the importance of further developing bilateral cooperation and dedicated security and defence dialogues, including thematic ones. It recalls in particular the need to boost security and defence cooperation with transatlantic partners. The Council recalls the importance of a more strategic approach on peace, security, and defence with third countries, through the strengthening of the EU's partnership toolkit, while keeping Member States fully involved. In this regard, the Council highlights the new Security and Defence Partnership instrument and looks forward to its implementation in a targeted and mutually beneficial manner. In this regard, it welcomes the signature of the Security and Defence Partnerships with the Republic of Moldova and looks forward to the signature of the additional Security and Defence Partnerships, starting with Norway. The first edition of the Schuman Security and Defence Forum in March 2023 offered a unique platform for political level exchanges with bilateral and multilateral partners on key peace, security, and defence challenges. The Council looks forward to its second edition on 28-29 May 2024.
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Military Mobility Pledge 2024

The Council recognises that:

- The swift, efficient and unimpeded movement of military forces is vital for European security and defence as it enables a credible and rapid response to threats and challenges across and beyond Europe. This also applies in the context of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and in particular with regards to the implementation of the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC) as set out in the EU Strategic Compass. It is of equal importance for national and multinational activities, notably in the framework of NATO;
- The Military Mobility pledge of 2018 provided an important contribution to the EU's efforts on Military Mobility. A renewed pledge is now required, based on broader and more ambitious commitments to address remaining gaps and the increasing need of resilience and preparedness in an increasingly challenging geostrategic environment in the EU's neighbourhood, most notably in the wake of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine but also beyond, taking into account a 360-degree approach;

- Speeding up the movement by Air, Land, and Sea and increasing overall resilience, including cyber, is essential. The movement of large-scale military forces at short notice, including military personnel, their materiel, and equipment within and beyond the EU requires a concerted effort at the EU and national levels already in peacetime. Applying a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach and contributing to more synergies between civilian and military needs in a mutually reinforcing manner, notably from the dual-use perspective, is crucial in that regard as also set out in the Action Plan on Military Mobility 2.0;
- Strengthening military mobility in the EU requires adequate resources and investment both at national level and EU level to enable the rapid movement of forces and equipment, without prejudice to the current multi-annual financial framework and negotiations on the future framework;
- Member States’ national commitments play a pivotal role to successfully achieve the shared aim of a well-connected Military Mobility network, based on multi-modal transport corridors and nodes, including logistic hubs, with reduced timelines, administrative hurdles and resilient, cyber-secure, better prepared and sustainable capabilities;

- The Action Plan on Military Mobility 2.0 supports Member States in the implementation of the commitments set out below, with the EEAS, Commission services, the European Defence Agency, and other relevant EU entities and agencies. Furthermore, the PESCO projects on “Military Mobility” and “Network of Logistic Hubs in Europe and support to Operations” facilitate the implementation of some new commitments;
- The third Joint Declaration on EU-NATO cooperation recognises tangible achievements in the field of Military Mobility, but also calls for further strengthening cooperation in this domain. A coherent and mutually reinforcing approach with NATO efforts on Military Mobility, in full respect of the guiding principles governing the EU-NATO partnership, namely inclusiveness, transparency, reciprocity, and decision-making autonomy, is essential and of shared interest to both organisations and all Member States. It is of utmost importance to intensify cooperation in a tangible and operational manner, to ensure that Military Mobility remains a “flagship” of EU-NATO cooperation;
- The participation of third countries in relevant PESCO projects continues to provide added value, including from a transatlantic and EU-NATO perspective, in accordance with agreed conditions and principles⁷.

⁷ Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/1639.

The Council therefore welcomes the commitment by the Member States to implement the following actions as soon as possible but not later than 2026, in line with national legislation and procedures, constitutional requirements of individual Member States regarding their national territory and military movements and transportation, and the specific character of their security and defence policies:

1. Prioritise transport dual-use infrastructure investments, by applying the ‘Military Requirements for Military Mobility within and beyond the EU’, with a view to urgently completing the EU priority corridors for large-scale and short-notice military movements as identified jointly by the Commission and EEAS, including the EU Military Staff, in cooperation with NATO, taking into account a 360-degree approach. Particular priority will be given to transport dual-use infrastructure investments that address specific bottlenecks for military movements or that otherwise have high military added value.
2. Enable, strengthen, and position the necessary multi-modal transport infrastructure and facilities in a networked approach along these corridors, including making full use of the relevant PESCO projects. This could apply for instance to logistic hubs and staging areas, convoy support centres, loading and unloading infrastructure, fuel support infrastructure, etc.

3. Grant cross-border movement permissions within a maximum of three working days, while acknowledging that achieving this objective requires substantial efforts at national level, in particular regarding over-sized cargo and dangerous goods. Member States will therefore urgently prioritise measures to ensure that this level of ambition can be reached in times of crisis, including in the context of the EU RDC, as well as with a view to facilitating thematic live and table-top exercises. Measures towards this objective should include i.a. ‘standing’ diplomatic clearances for activities under the EU CSDP, as well as NATO and other national and multinational frameworks, notably through arrangements based on dedicated Military Mobility corridors and procedures as well as by developing and applying digitalised and harmonised procedures where possible. In addition, Member States are encouraged to set-up multi-/bilateral coordination mechanisms with a view to further harmonising and improving procedures along main corridors.
4. Advance efforts to consolidate coordination and cooperation mechanisms. To this end, setting up an inter-ministerial and inter-agency coordination group at national level, in line with the whole-of-government approach, to effectively improve information flows and enhance day-to-day coordination among relevant ministries, agencies and (local or regional) authorities will provide a constructive base for Member States. Furthermore, the national POC network established by the PESCO project Military Mobility will ensure the quick handling of requests for cross-border movements and continue exchanges on best practises and lessons learned while assessing additional tasks in the course of 2024.

5. Ensure a prioritised access of the armed forces to relevant transport modes, networks, and assets, including required airspace, also through the EU regulatory framework, in support of national efforts, most notably in times of crisis and conflict and where possible already in peacetime, in full respect of the sovereignty of EU Member States over their national territory and national decision-making processes regarding military movements. To this end, Member States should ensure the availability of the necessary capacity, i.a. through establishing strategic partnerships, including joint or national initiatives, notably framework contracts with the civilian transport providers.
6. Encourage Member States to share information and best practices on cooperation within strategic corridors. This can for instance be done through relevant PESCO projects and the European Defence Agency (EDA).
7. Strengthen the overall resilience in all domains related to the transport sector, including cyber security. Concrete measure should include addressing Military Mobility aspects in national and EU-level cybersecurity risk assessments to enhance the cyber resilience of dual-use transport systems and services at the national level.

8. Support and conduct exercises to test cross-border military movements in all domains, notably permissions, related arrangements, procedures, and provisions, including through regular EU Table-top Exercises on Military Mobility, EU military live exercises also linked to the EU RDC, or by participating in other multinational exercises as appropriate.
9. Develop necessary defence capabilities for military transport, including strategic lift capabilities, based on the CARD findings and the 2023 EU Capability Development Priorities, particularly its priority “Military Mobility”, in line with the single set of forces principle.
10. To mitigate existing capacities’ shortfalls relevant for the rapid deployment, sustainment, and redeployment of military equipment and personnel within and beyond the EU, Member States will examine common structured solutions for strategic lift capabilities for all modes of transport as appropriate.

11. Support ongoing initiatives to digitise military related customs formalities to reduce the administrative burden on the movement of troops and materiel from and to the customs territory of the Union. To this end, EU Member States are committed to increase cooperation among each other and with relevant stakeholders, notably EDA and Commission services, in coordination with NATO, while following a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.
12. Promote systematic outreach to citizens and civil society, including through dedicated information campaigns, for instance linked to (live) exercises, and engagements to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of Military Mobility.
13. Working towards synchronising efforts, Member States will ensure closer alignment on national level among respective policies, doctrines, and guidelines, making full use of opportunities stemming from memberships in both EU and NATO.

The Council furthermore welcomes the commitment by the Member States to amend, as appropriate, the national plans for Military Mobility accordingly by the end of 2024 and will revert to assess progress on an annual basis.