



Speech delivered by EDA Chief Executive Jorge DOMECCQ

Check against delivery!

- Dear Excellency, Sirs, Generals, distinguished guests,
- Welcome again at this EDA AAR conference. It is the first time we organize an AAR conference in Europe. And rightly so.
- For AAR we used to be very “*trans-atlantically*” dependent. But slowly but surely, we are catching up in Europe, with national and multinational initiatives developing a future capability, meeting our operational requirements.
- This not with a view to duplicate but to be able to act, including to become credible partners.
- So, from that perspective it also makes sense to organize this conference in Europe on a regular basis as well.

- This is an EDA conference but the close cooperation with NATO and ARSAG is abundantly clear. This cooperation heavily determined the agenda for this conference.
- I very much welcome our NATO partners to this conference. The work we do together in AAR is exemplary for how we promote close EU-NATO cooperation also in the frame of the implementation of the Warsaw and Brussels Joint Declarations.
- The joint political commitment complemented by the excellent staff-to-staff cooperation led to a completely synchronized and harmonized approach towards dealing with the AAR shortfall, both on the NATO and EU side.
- Secondly, I welcome our friends from ARSAG. AAR is clearly a global issue and the fact that ARSAG attends this Conference proves that we are tackling the problem on the worldwide playing field.
- For years now EDA has had a very good relationship with ARSAG and we were very pleased that we could facilitate your yearly autumn Steering Board back to back with this AAR conference here in Brussels. I understand you had a very productive two days just prior to this conference.
- AAR has been recognized as a shortfall during the Chicago Summit 2012. It was decided that the relative shortfall and

the European trans-Atlantic dependency was to be solved within Europe.

- In December 2013 the Heads of State and Government at the European Council acknowledged AAR as a key capability shortfall and tasked EDA to act. It then became one of the four Key Projects within Agency.
- It was decided to tackle this shortfall by an EDA Pooling and Sharing initiative. This initiative resulted amongst others in the creation of a Multinational MRTT Fleet.
- During the Wales Summit 2014 AAR was also listed as one of the 16 Key shortfalls within NATO. The EDA AAR project is totally synchronized with the NATO Roadmap. This prevents duplication but more important creates opportunities for more collaboration.
- By increasing the European AAR capability, the participating nations also strive to meet their NDPP targets.
- But what leads to a successful multinational project? Let's look at the MMF to identify some of the key elements which made that project the success it is today.
- As mentioned it started with the political acknowledgement of the need for a European effort to improve the AAR capability.

- EDA then initiated this journey on which together with the lead nation, the Netherlands, and all the other participants we developed this project.
- Not just multi-nationally but this project also turned out to be a multi-agency effort, with the support of NSPA and OCCAR.
- This political top-down acknowledgement is a pre-requisite which if it coincides with the right bottom up project management is key to a successful international collaborative project.
- This journey resulted in a multinational acquisition of 8 MRTT aircraft, but also in multi-nationally supporting and operating this fleet for the next 30 years.
- This commitment from the EU Member States and NATO Nations addressing together a capability shortfall and taking advantage of the added value of existing multinational frameworks is exactly in my view the way forward for multinational defence cooperation.
- MMF is a perfect example on how to get from the Shortfall to a Capability. The project doubled the AAR capability of the nations involved! That is far more than a significant success.
- Commander Kreiter will later on explain all the details on the MMF project, but now that we are up to 8 aircraft, we still see a lot of growth potential.

- 3 more optional aircraft (*aircrafts 9, 10 and 11*) in the present contract enable other MS who are in need of this important capability to benefit from the present window of opportunity. EDA stands ready to assist interested MS in the process to explore their potential participation in this important project.
- But..... we are not there yet. Studies reveal that we will be about 40 tankers short in 2025. Tankers are measured in KC135 equivalents. Especially in peak demand during operations, therefore, a buffer like envisaged through extra A400M AAR kits together with more nations in the MMF could be the combined solution solving the remaining part of the shortfall.
- A fundamental question is how we can ensure that we are jointly addressing the relevant shortfalls like AAR at the European level and spending our resources on the right activities.
- Let me be clear, it is not self-evident that more money will lead to a more coherent European capability landscape. In fact, more money may lead to even more fragmentation and inefficiency if we do not ensure coherence.

- How should this be achieved? To begin with, I would like to refer to the EU Global Strategy and its Implementation Plan, which mentions the notion of coherence in two senses.
- First, coherence in defence planning and capability development at the European level, and second, coherence with NATO's defence planning processes.
- Although all three initiatives launched at the European level to reinforce defence cooperation, namely CARD, PESCO and EDF are separate, they are strongly interlinked.
- In a somewhat simplistic manner, we could say that the CDP tells us what to focus our common efforts on, the CARD gives us an overview of where we stand and identifies next steps, PESCO in turn gives us options how to do it in a collaborative manner, while the EDF could provide the funds to support the implementation of cooperative defence projects.
- The overarching objective is of course to develop a coherent set of usable, deployable, interoperable and sustainable capabilities, for use in CSDP missions and operations, or within other national or multinational frameworks such as UN, NATO, etc., considering that MS have a single set of forces and capabilities. This is also why, throughout the CDP process, we do ensure coherence of output with NATO.

- Air-to-air refuelling featured as part of the 2014 CDP priorities. Following the recently concluded CDP revision and the agreement of the 2018 EU Capability Development Priorities by the EDA SB, it is now among the “reconfirmed” priorities.
- Before concluding, allow me to highlight two points. First, AAR is closely linked to the operational effectiveness of member States. For example, there is a clear link with Cross-Border Movement Permission which is an integral part of the overarching Military Mobility initiative in Europe. AAR will be fully integrated in the Cross-Border Movement Permission in order to facilitate the planning and execution of flights by tanker aircraft while refueling fighter aircraft in trail.
- Second and as stated in the beginning, Europe was very transatlantically dependent for AAR capability, which became very clear during the Libya crisis. Now that we are slowly regaining the balance by increasing the European AAR capability, we are replacing the dependency and thus strengthen the European Operational autonomy. This is intrinsically linked to an uninterrupted availability of the appropriate technological and industrial skills and capacities which underpin a European AAR capability.
- This is to say that progress has been achieved, but continuous efforts are needed to fully mitigate the shortfall. Let’s keep up

the good work in order to overcome the remaining 30% shortfall.

- AAR is truly an example of good work in progress and EDA is a frontrunner to address Member States' needs.
- Wishing you a successful conference, I should thank all those contributed to make this first AAR conference in Europe happen.
- Thank you.