



EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY

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PRESS RELEASE

EDA STEERING BOARD REVIEWS AGENCY'S PLANS FOR 2006 (BRUSSELS, 13 OCTOBER 2005)

European Union Defence Ministers agreed today that spending on defence-related Research & Technology needs to increase and to be more effective through greater collaboration between EU countries.

At a meeting of the Steering Board of the European Defence Agency at RAF Lyneham in the United Kingdom, the Ministers reviewed the Agency's plans for 2006. Ministers agreed that the Agency should move into launching ad-hoc projects as soon as possible.

Ministers witnessed a demonstration of U.K. air-to-air refuelling capabilities and 10 countries issued a statement announcing that they had agreed to create an ad hoc group, supported by the EDA, to consider possible new approaches to solving the EU's shortfall.

"I very much welcome this step. It is a good example of the way forward" said Javier Solana, Head of European Defence Agency. "We need more projects like this to address the military shortfalls which are still there in many areas, six years after the start of the European Security and Defence Policy. We need commitments to allocate resources. We need multinational initiatives in smaller or larger groups," he added.

The ministers also reviewed the principles for a voluntary Code of Conduct to bring more cross-border competition in the European Defence Equipment Market and confirmed their commitment to take a final decision on the initiative at their Steering Board meeting next month.

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The Steering Board considered moves to rationalise testing and evaluation of defence equipment, where there may be scope for significant savings by creating centres of excellence in specific technologies in different EU states, and said such work should be pursued energetically.

The ministers also looked at suggested indicators and strategic targets for measuring progress on the EU's agenda to transform its military capabilities to meet the requirements of ESDP and asked the Agency to prepare formal proposals for a decision at the next meeting.

“In the end, this transformation can only be done by national governments,” said Solana. “The EDA will do everything it can to help, but the Agency does not deliver capabilities itself. Its participating Member States will have to. But they can now use the EDA instrument to support their efforts to improve Europe's defence performance.”

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- Background information -

The European Defence Agency (EDA) was established by the Council on 12 July 2004. It is designed "to support the Council and the Member States in their effort to improve European defence capabilities in the field of crisis management and to sustain the ESDP as it stands now and develops in the future". More specifically, the Agency is ascribed four functions, relating to:

- a) defence capabilities development;
- b) armaments cooperation;
- c) the European defence technological and industrial base and defence equipment market;
- d) research and technology.

These functions all relate to improving Europe's defence performance, by promoting coherence in place of fragmentation.

The Agency's tasks are:

- to work for a more comprehensive and systematic approach to defining and meeting the capability needs of ESDP (supporting, for example, the "Headline Goal 2010" initiative);
- to promote equipment collaborations, both to contribute to defence capabilities and as catalysts for further restructuring of the European defence industry;
- to promote European defence-relevant R&T, as vital both to a healthy defence technological and industrial base and to defining and satisfying future capability requirements. This will involve pursuing collaborative use of national defence R&T funds, in the context of a European policy which identifies priorities.

The EDA is an Agency of the European Union. All EU Member States, except Denmark, participate. High Representative Javier Solana is Head of the Agency and chairman of the Steering Board, which acts under the Council's authority and within the framework of guidelines issued by the Council.