



EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY

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PRESS RELEASE

EU GOVERNMENTS LAUNCH NEW PLAN TO BUILD DEFENCE CAPABILITIES FOR FUTURE ESDP OPERATIONS (BRUSSELS, 14 DECEMBER 2006)

European Union governments agreed today on the principles of a Capability Development Plan, which will provide a systematic and structured approach to building the capabilities required for operations under the European Security and Defence Policy far into the future. The Plan should also assist Member States to develop their national plans and programmes, balancing forces appropriately against ambition and resource.

The decision by the Steering Board of the European Defence Agency, which will coordinate work on the CDP, will build on the Long-Term Vision report endorsed by governments in October. The LTV reviewed geopolitical, demographic, economic, technological and military trends over the next 20 years, and set out a high-level view of the defence capabilities which will be required to respond to this changing world.

“The LTV is an excellent foundation for our future work, but we now have to make its capability guidance more specific and, therefore, more useful,” said Lo Casteleijn of the Dutch Defence Ministry, who chaired the meeting. The Steering Board, the decision-making body of the Agency on which its 24 participating Member States and the European Commission are represented, was meeting in Capabilities formation, involving senior defence planners from national ministries.

“As well as identifying areas for capability improvement, we have to bring out opportunities to pool efforts and to cooperate by sharing information about our national plans. We must also ensure that we give the guidance our defence industries need to help with their research and development

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efforts,” Casteleijn added.

The Steering Board stressed that the CDP was not intended to be an over-arching, supranational plan and that national defence planning and investment decision-taking would remain subject to the sovereign processes of each Member State.

The work on the CDP will cover four main areas:

- Establishing the baseline of shortfalls and their relative priority, from the Headline Goal 2010 exercise, a set of goals agreed by governments in mid-2004 to enable the European Union by 2010 to be able to carry out humanitarian and rescue and peace-keeping tasks in crisis-management operations;
- Developing the LTV capability guidance , by testing the main hypotheses against “alternative futures” and by a series of capability studies on key issues;
- Collating a database of Member States’ current defence plans and programmes;
- Harvesting lessons for future capability from current experience.

The process will involve the Agency, Member States, the EU Military Committee, the EU Military Staff and the Council of Ministers. The EDA will establish a team of experts to lead some of the elements and to maintain an overview of all four work strands. The Steering Board emphasised its determination to maintain close involvement with the work, meeting again on this subject in the first half of next year.

“One of the reasons the EDA was created was to help provide a systematic and end-to-end approach which would identify ESDP’s capability and capacity priorities, from current urgent operational requirements to longer-term challenges and opportunities. The CDP will provide a framework of agreed capability priorities well beyond the Headline Goal 2010 horizon,” said EDA Chief Executive Nick Witney.

“But it should also be a vehicle to promote dialogue and transparency among Member States on defence planning and investment and what their medium- to long-term defence planning looks like, so that opportunities can be identified and pursued for joint investment and collaborative projects, for pooled acquisition of capabilities or for anything else where working together promises better value for money for constrained defence budgets,” he added.

The Steering Board also reviewed the range of capability development efforts already underway within the Agency's structure of Integrated Development Teams, and agreed that a small increment to the Agency's staff was needed to fully exploit the emerging opportunities and handle the extra work.

The Steering Board also directed the Agency to take forward work on Network Enabled Capabilities (NEC) for ESDP, working closely with all relevant Council actors, and stakeholders.

It finally took note of the analysis of Member States' responses on the UK's Strategic Airlift Initiative and directed the Agency to further explore with the willing Member States possibilities to pool acquisitions of additional aircrafts, to partner in contracting transport services, and to pool maintenance and training in case of additional A400M procurement, – noting that, for some Member States, battlegroup airlift needs in particular are unlikely to be fully met unless on a pooled basis.

ENDS

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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 EDA is an Agency of the European Union. High Representative Solana is Head of the Agency, chairman of the Steering Board, which acts under the Council's authority and within the framework of guidelines issued by the Council.

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