



EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY

Brussels, 24 May 2007

PRESS RELEASE

NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY APPOINTED

(BRUSSELS, 24 May 2007)

Javier Solana, Head of the European Defence Agency, announced today that the EDA Steering Board has appointed Alexander Weis of Germany as the Agency's Chief Executive from 1 October, succeeding Nick Witney, who has led the Agency since its creation in July 2004.

The Steering Board also decided that, from 1 January 2008, there will be two Deputy Chief Executives. Carlo Magrassi, currently Armaments Director of the Agency, will be in charge of strategy and Adam Sowa, the Deputy National Armaments Director in the Polish Ministry of Defence, will handle Agency operations. They will succeed Germany's Hilmar Linnenkamp, who has served as sole deputy since the creation of the EDA.

"Nick Witney has done an outstanding job as the first head of the Agency," Solana said. "He led the team which laid the foundations for the EDA in 2004 and, since becoming its first Chief Executive, has created a vibrant institution which has delivered substantial results and made a real difference to European defence cooperation."

"During this time, we have seen the opening of the European defence equipment market through the Code of Conduct, the publication of the thought-provoking Long-Term Vision report, the launch of a new framework for joint R&T (the Joint Investment Programme), agreement on a strategy for the defence technological and industrial base and the start of work on a new Capabilities Development Plan," he added.

"My deep thanks also go to Hilmar Linnenkamp, whose wisdom and experience have made a decisive contribution to the Agency's success."

Weis, 47, is currently Deputy National Armaments Director in the German Ministry of Defence.

"Alexander Weis has been closely involved in the work of the Agency. The Steering Board is confident that he is the right person to take forward the work which Nick Witney has started. I know that he will receive excellent support from Carlo Magrassi and Adam Sowa," Solana said.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:
Malgorzata Alterman - Head of Media and Communications
Direct line: +32 (0)2 504 28 10 mobile : +32 (0) 478 96 30 97
e-mail: malgorzata.alterman@eda.europa.eu
www.eda.europa.eu

“It has been a privilege to lead the European Defence Agency during its first years and to see it mature so quickly into a major player on the European defence scene,” Witney said.

“But the Agency will only continue to thrive if its staff are regularly interchanged with the national Ministries of Defence who are its shareholders. I could not wish for anyone better to hand over to than Alexander,” he added.

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Direct line: +32 (0)2 504 28 10 mobile : +32 (0) 478 96 30 97
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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.