

STATEMENT
BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL/HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR CFSP,
DR. JAVIER SOLANA,
TO THE CONFERENCE OF DEFENCE COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS OF
THE 27 NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS,
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"Dear participants in the Conference of Defence Committee Chairpersons, meeting in Berlin today.

I very much welcome the fact that you, the Chairpersons of Defence Committees in the National Parliaments of the EU Member States, are meeting on a regular basis in order to discuss issues linked to the European Security and Defence Policy. I know that this morning in Berlin you have had interesting discussions on ESDP and the European Union's relationship with NATO. This afternoon you will be briefed on the European Union's capability development in the civilian and civ-mil area by a member of the EU Military Staff from Brussels.

I would have liked to be among you today. However, I am attending the General Affairs and External Relations Council today and tomorrow in Luxembourg, where we have a number of important issues on our agenda.

The role of National Parliaments in CFSP and ESDP is an important one. Not only for reasons of democratic control and scrutiny, but also for gathering public support and giving visibility to the solutions we need to apply to the challenges we are facing today as the European Union. This is also why I earlier this year appointed a Personal Representative for Parliamentary Affairs, Mr. Michael Matthiessen, to deal specifically with the parliamentary dimension of CFSP and ESDP. He is with you today, as an observer, and will report back to me on your valuable contributions to our reflections on the developments of ESDP.

When in Cologne in 1999 the European Council pledged for the European Union to develop the necessary means and capabilities to assume responsibilities on the international stage, no one could have envisaged the operational challenges we would face. Despite the difficulties, we succeeded in making the European Security and Defence Policy a reality. But success brought an increasing demand on the EU. We are called upon by our Member States and by the UN, in support of the people of Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Balkans, to undertake more and more demanding missions in difficult theatres.

ESDP is a policy in action. Even before we had the time to consolidate our structures we were called to launch our first military operation. Since then we have covered the full spectrum of possible ESDP missions: military but also civilian, military

operations with or without recourse to NATO assets and capabilities, in our neighbourhood - close to our borders - or further away in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, including very rapid robust short term military interventions.

We have provided key enablers for "peace and stability" in these areas. Where we have acted we have succeeded. Our strength is that we are able to draw on a mixture of tools ranging from civilian and military crisis management to economic, political and institution building in a flexible joined-up way.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo we have acted decisively to ensure that the electoral process enabled the peaceful transition to a democratically elected government. In Aceh, the EU moved quickly with its ASEAN partners to capitalise on their post-Tsunami desire for peace and opportunity. In Bosnia and Herzegovina our military force, run under the Berlin Plus arrangements, continues to ensure the safe and secure environment. In Rafah, we acted to enable the opening of the border crossing point. In the West Bank, in Kinshasa and in Bosnia and Herzegovina we mentor, monitor and support the local police. We also have security sector reform and rule of law training missions in the DRC and Iraq respectively. In Darfur we support the African Union both in the civilian and military fields.

This year, we will add to these responsibilities the conduct of a police and rule of law mission in Kosovo and a police mission in Afghanistan. In Kosovo, we will launch our largest ever civilian mission. It is already clear that this mission will form a critical part of the agenda for ESDP this year and beyond. It is also right that we take a greater operational role in our 'backyard', and our planning for this mission is well-underway.

To be able to act effectively we need to have at our disposal the necessary military and civilian capabilities. Efforts are still needed to address some important gaps. We need to spend more and spend better.

There are some very positive developments. The creation of the European Defence Agency, which is now up and running, is certainly a significant step forward.

The EU Battlegroups are also a very important and very concrete tool with very robust forces, often the heart of which is composed by Special Forces, in order to react extremely quickly to a crisis. This is now reality and since January this year we have on stand-by two Battlegroups available. It is also a "transformation" tool for our military instruments as it fosters Member States efforts to develop more deployable and interoperable forces.

Finally, we have at our disposal a European Gendarmerie Force which aims at a consistent and coordinated capability to deploy police forces with military status and full police powers.

In acting together for peace and stability through ESDP the EU has supported concretely effective multilateralism.

We have developed a strong relation with the UN. I already mentioned our action in DRC in support of the UN. We work in support to regional organisations such as the African Union and other regional partners also to reinforce their ability to respond to crisis.

Our very good cooperation with NATO is illustrated by two successful operations in the Balkans making use of NATO assets and capabilities, or missions, as in Sudan, where both us and NATO have coordinated and mutually reinforced our action. Our combined efforts in Kosovo and Afghanistan demonstrate again the quality of our concrete relationship.

With these words, let me thank you for your support to ESDP, as Chairpersons of Defence Committees of the National Parliaments in the EU Member States, and wish you a very successful conference in Berlin.

Javier Solana
