



REMARKS

Remarks by HR/VP Mogherini at the press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council (Defence)

Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council (Defence)

Check against delivery!

First of all, let me say that today - as we were meeting with the Defence Ministers of the 28 Member States - we were receiving encouraging news from Korea. And I would start by announcing to you that we will be pleased to host the Foreign Minister of South Korea, Foreign Minister Kang [Kyung-wha], with whom I was in contact today, at the Foreign Affairs Council on 19 March. So with her we will have updates on the state of play, but also work on the ways in which the European Union can support this first encouraging steps that we see coming from the Korean peninsula.

Today, with the Defence Ministers, we had what can be defined as a historic first meeting of the Council in the framework of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). We adopted the first two agreements today in that format. First, a decision formalising the list of the Permanent Structured Cooperation projects in the field of defence, identified in December, and the list of Member States participating to these projects. And the second decision we took in that format is a Recommendation with a roadmap to structure the further implementation process.

The Council will adopt now in June also a Recommendation on the sequencing of the fulfilment of the commitments. So, the process will continue and we will continue to prepare the further steps that we will take in view of the June European Council.

To enable the Permanent Structured Cooperation projects to run smoothly and consistently, the Council agreed to put in place a common set of rules for the governance of the Permanent Structured Cooperation by June this year, and in due course also to define the general conditions for the exceptional participation of third states. In parallel, we will also launch the process to generate new projects to be adopted by November this year.

We managed "to give birth to a baby" - during the last year, in 2017 - and now we have the collective responsibility to take care of this baby, keep the attention focused on the implementation of the decisions taken and deliver on the commitments that Member States participating in the Permanent Structured Cooperation took.

Some of the capabilities generated through the Permanent Structured Cooperation will be financially supported through the European Defence Fund, set up by the European Commission - especially their industrial development or in the field of research - but they will, in any case, remain owned by the participating Member States.

I want to clearly say that there is one set of forces that is at the disposal of every single Member State and then it is up to the Member States that own the capabilities to put them at the disposal of the European Union, of the UN, of NATO, or whatever kind of activities they are engaged in.

These first decisions we took on the Permanent Structured Cooperation are part of a broader picture that we discussed at length this morning with the Ministers. We evaluated very positively all the work that we did with unity and determination on Security and Defence over the last year and a half in an unprecedented way, giving birth to the European Union of defence and security - after so many decades of talks about that, but without further progress.

Now, today, we agreed to continue our work on two different tracks: One, to implement the defence initiatives that were decided last year - in particular, as I mentioned, the Permanent Structured Cooperation with important decisions taken today for the first time, but also the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence and the European Defence Fund in a coordinated and coherent way. And we also decided with the Ministers today to continue, to put on the table other proposals, to deepen our work on Security and Defence. So, implement the ones already decided, but also take further steps in unity and with full determination.

I would mention three fields for further action. One is in itself both, a project of

the Permanent Structured Cooperation and one of the projects of the EU-NATO cooperation, namely our work on military mobility to facilitate the military mobility within the European Union territory. It is something that can be done only through European Union action. And this is something that we decided to accelerate and deliver on. I will present an Action Plan together with the Commission in the coming weeks - I think and I hope before the end of the month - so that we can move forward in concrete terms on this, which is a priority not only for the European Union but also for NATO and the NATO allies.

The second field in which we decided to move forward is the partnerships. We have identified in these months, in these years, a strong request from our partners to do more in the field of security and defence with the European Union. So the Ministers decided, we decided, to explore ways to structure more and to expand more our partnership frameworks.

And the third issue is about money, because high ambitions need to be supported by adequate resources. We have entered the debate on the next Multiannual Financial Framework. We need to make sure that we have for the future adequate resources and adequate instruments to mobilise resources to fulfil our level of ambition, which is very high. I proposed to the Ministers to work on the establishment of a European Peace Facility. Some of you might remember - I mentioned this already in December last year, at the eve of the European Council that took the decision on the Permanent Structured Cooperation - that I believe we need an EU instrument to finance military and defence related expenditures that currently cannot be financed under the EU budget.

It would be a European Peace Facility, off-budget, that would allow the European Union to provide support, capacity building and assistance to our partners' armed forces. The initial stage of the debate started today; I presented the proposal to the Ministers. The first reaction was positive, we decided to continue the preparatory work. I will be able to give you more details in the weeks and months to come, but definitely we will come back to this idea of giving ourselves an instrument that allows us to do all that is required for us to do in this field.

We had then a very good exchange with the Ministers and the NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Goettemoeller. For once, unfortunately, [NATO] Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg was not in Brussels and not able to join us; he is travelling to Iraq yesterday and to Jordan today. We had a good telephone conversation over the weekend and we will meet probably already at the end of this week to continue our conversation at our level. We assessed together with our friends in NATO that ours is a natural partnership and that relations and cooperation between NATO and the European Union has never been as good as it is today.

And we have further space - let us say - to increase, deepen and improve it. We

have 74 concrete actions [for cooperation](#) that we share between European Union and NATO in different fields, from counter-terrorism, to maritime security, to cyber or military mobility - being one of the flagship projects we share. We agreed that now it is time for us to implement together these 74 actions - in principle and as a matter of priority, in preparation for the NATO Summit that will be held here in Brussels, in July. We will present a Third Progress Report to our respective Council in June, just before the NATO Summit in July.

We reconfirmed what does not need to be confirmed because that is absolutely clear: that there is full complementarity and full coherence between the work we do to strengthen the European Union defence and security and the cooperation between the European Union and NATO. Again, I stressed this several times, [Jens] Stoltenberg stressed this several times: it is not a coincidence if our work on the EU defence and security has never been so strong and at the same time, the EU-NATO cooperation has never been so strong - the two things go together.

Last but not least, we shared views with the Ministers, on our Missions and Operations - as you know we have several of them. In particular today, we discussed our training missions deployed in Central African Republic, Somalia and Mali. They do an excellent work in supporting the armed forces of the respective countries in addressing the different security issues they have, be it countering terrorism, countering organised crime, trafficking, guaranteeing the security of very difficult borders.

We are doing so, by coordinating closely not only with our hosting countries, but also with the United Nations that, in most cases, has a strong presence on the ground; but also, in the case of Mali for instance, with the regional presence, with the G5 Sahel Joint Force for which we just organised 10 days ago [the Support Conference, here in Brussels, raising more than €400 million in support of this Force](#).

We evaluated also with the Ministers the first results of our Military Planning and Conduct Capability. You might remember, more or less at this time of the year last year, I was presenting in this room the decision to create this Military Planning and Conduct Capability based in Brussels in the Headquarters, the MPCC. Many were sceptical about it. It was established last June, and has taken over the command of the three military training missions and we assess that it is bringing added value, it is going well, and so we will continue to work in this direction.

I have seen with Member States and the Ministers the determination to invest even more in our training missions, including with human resources. This is indeed - I think - a wise choice to make. Empowering our partners to take care of their security is also a way to take care of our own security, and we see this clearly in the case of this Sahel and further beyond.

I will stop here. I have been even too long, but it has been a very intense Council and I thank you for your attention and can take a few questions.

Link to the video:

J'aimerais revenir sur la Facilité européenne de paix - European Peace Facility. Si j'ai bien compris, cela ne concerne que les opérations ou missions militaires et pas les missions civiles, ou est-ce que ça concerne les deux? Pouvez-vous nous en dire un peu plus sur la façon dont vous voyez cela? Comment allez-vous vous assurer que ce qui n'est pas possible aujourd'hui avec le mécanisme Athéna - puisqu'apparemment un ou deux pays bloquent - sera possible demain avec cette nouvelle Facilité de paix où je pense que les pays membres seront demandeurs. Par ailleurs, à propos des opérations, a-t-on pu résoudre les questions des lacunes de personnel dans les différentes missions EUTM, est-ce que plusieurs pays se sont proposés ou également dans la MPCC?

Sur la deuxième question, en effet, j'ai pu vérifier le fait qu'il est utile de faire part directement aux Ministres qu'il y a un manque de personnel parce qu'immédiatement il y a eu une levée de mains et des offres pour augmenter la contribution des Etats membres en termes de personnel, ici à Bruxelles et dans les missions de formation. J'ai donc été très encouragée par le fait que de nombreux Etats membres ont exprimé leur volonté, et certains même le nombre exact de personnel qu'ils vont déployer, avec lesquels ils vont contribuer d'avantage aux missions de formation de l'Union européenne. En général je pense que c'est un signal très fort de soutien et d'appropriation de la part des Etats membres d'un travail qui est considéré comme très utile sur le terrain.

Sur la question de la Facilité de paix, je préférerais ne pas donner de détails maintenant parce que ce fut une première discussion entre les Ministres fondée sur l'idée d'avoir les premiers éléments de comment cela pourrait fonctionner. La réaction des Etats membres fut positive et je me suis engagée à leur présenter une proposition plus détaillée sur la base de laquelle la conversation et les décisions vont suivre. Vous connaissez bien ma démarche qui consiste de toujours de partager d'abord avec les Etats membres, puis avec les médias, donc je vous donnerai plus d'éléments à ce sujet au moment où cela sera fait également avec les Etats membres. Vous devrez patienter encore un peu mais pas trop longtemps, car comme vous le savez, le rythme de travail va continuer à être soutenu. J'espère que nous aurons une proposition dans les prochains mois, approximativement.

How would the European Peace Facility differ from the EU Instrument for contributing to Stability and Peace which also aims to do training, capacity building and to provide non-lethal equipment, or are we talking about the same thing here and just giving it a different name? Secondly, on PESCO governance, could you perhaps just give us a concrete example of how that is going to work or will those rules remain confidential?

On the European Peace Facility, it would be a different thing. It would be a Facility that would provide us the capacity to finance not only capacity building but also military equipment, assistance to our partners' armed forces and it would also - if this goes in that direction and there is support to that - facilitate support to our partners' peacekeeping operations across the world. As you know, this is done for the moment through the African Peace Facility and that gives us obviously a geographical scope that is limited to Sub-Saharan Africa, and everything goes through the African Union and the agreement with the African Union.

For instance, the European Peace Facility would be - let us say - similar to this but with a broader geographical scope - not geographically limited, and would obviously give the European Union the capacity to decide autonomously when, where and how to finance and support our partners. It could also be extended to cover our military operations. It is work in the making, these are ideas that I flagged; now we are going to flesh them out and continue the work with the Member States to see if that part of the financial instruments can also be an issue where we - let us say - strengthen and create more coherence in our tool box.

On PESCO governance, the decision has been published. ([Council Recommendation concerning a roadmap for the implementation of PESCO](#)).

Would the budget of the European Peace facility be outside of the Union budget and will it still be mainly Member States contributions or can we still expect a part coming from the development funds, the Instrument for Peace or from other instruments to streamline into this new concrete instrument?

The basic idea which I proposed to the Ministers to further work on, is to have an off-budget instrument, because - as you know - for budgetary instruments we have very strict legal limitations, on what we can and what we cannot finance. This would be an instrument to finance in a smooth, predictable and flexible manner - with obviously a strong political decision at the origin of anything - the things that we cannot finance currently with budgetary instruments.

You are aware about the arrest of two Greek soldiers by Turkey during patrols at the Greek-Turkish borders. I would like to ask you whether you are concerned by the fact that the arrest of the Greek soldiers took place in the border area where there are patrols in order to stem illegal immigrants into Europe? I would like to have your comment on this.

First of all, let me say that, yes, not only I am aware, but also all the Defence Ministers of the 28 Member States are aware. Our Greek colleague, the Minister of [National] Defence of Greece [Panos Kammenos], has briefed us this morning as a first point of our discussions on the dynamics and also on the state of play. I think it has been extremely important for us to share this information and also to express our full hope that there will be a swift and positive outcome to this issue.

It is extremely important to have good neighbourly relations. This is something that we always convey to our Turkish interlocutors at all different levels, including mine. And this, I would add, is always the case between neighbours, it is especially the case between neighbours that are all Europeans. And, in particular, between two NATO allies. So, there was full information on the point, solidarity, and especially the hope that this situation can find a positive and swift outcome. That was the common wish of all the Defence Ministers.

We know that tomorrow in the College you may talk about the Italian situation. May you tell us if there is any concern about the international position of Italy.

There is an Italian government with which we are currently working perfectly well. Minister [of Defence, Roberta] Pinotti was here today and expressed the Italian position. The Italians voted, everybody noticed and this is democracy. There will be a change in government that will come for the future. For the time being, we

work with the current government. And for the next, we will see whenever it will be in place. In the meantime, we have full confidence in the wisdom of the President of the Italian Republic [Sergio Mattarella] who will have to take his time and his steps. And having been inside the Italian Parliament myself, I know well that there are some procedures to be followed, including inside the Chambers that will need to be waited for. So, we work with the current government as long as it is in place; for the future we will see.

Vous avez évoqué le partenariat naturel entre l'Union européenne et l'OTAN: est-ce que la Secrétaire Générale Adjointe de l'OTAN [Rose Gottemoeller] - qui a discuté avec vous - a traduit la position de l'administration américaine, ou d'une partie de l'administration américaine, qui a l'air de trouver que ce partenariat n'est pas aussi naturel que ça, qui a évoqué la concurrence possible de l'Union européenne, la perturbation que cela pourrait créer à l'OTAN, et aussi une éventuelle pénalisation de l'industrie américaine. Donc, est-ce que vous avez le sentiment que ce partenariat est totalement naturel pour tous les membres de l'OTAN?

L'expression "partenariat naturel" a été utilisée par Rose Gottemoeller que j'ai pris de ces remarques introductives aujourd'hui. Je pense que le fait de renforcer l'Union européenne sur l'aspect de la défense et de la sécurité est aussi utile pour renforcer l'Alliance, est un sentiment partagé au sein de l'OTAN. Nous avons commencé à travailler sur ce projet de renforcement, de lancement de l'Union européenne de la Défense, il y a un an et demi à Bratislava. Déjà à ce moment-là, [Jens] Stoltenberg [Secrétaire-Générale de l'OTAN] était avec nous et nous avons souligné que ce processus allait se faire en toute transparence - c'est ce que nous avons fait.

Aujourd'hui, nous avons aussi partagé avec la Secrétaire-Générale Adjointe de l'OTAN les décisions que nous avons prises à propos de la PESCO, avec une attention particulière à ne pas multiplier les efforts, mais au contraire, à combler les manques surtout en termes de capacités militaires, à travailler avec les instruments de l'Union européenne pour faire en sorte que les Etats membres - la majorité d'entre eux sont aussi des alliés de l'OTAN - puissent améliorer leur façon d'investir et de produire des capacités, qui après sont donc aussi à la disposition de l'OTAN s'ils le désirent.

La participation des Etats tiers, par exemple au projet de la PESCO, est une décision que les Etats membres participant à la PESCO vont prendre dans les prochains mois. Mais il est évident que l'approche est premièrement coopérative envers les Etats tiers, surtout ceux avec lesquels la coopération en matière de défense est établie depuis longtemps et stratégique.

Je n'ai pas vu de doute ni d'interrogation, ni aujourd'hui, ni dans les semaines passées sur le fait que le renforcement de l'Europe de la Défense est également utile pour l'Alliance. A ce sujet, j'étais avec les Ministres de la Défense de l'OTAN il y a trois semaines ici à Bruxelles et nous avons eu des échanges extrêmement positifs et constructifs, et c'est seulement naturel parce que nous avons préparé et réalisé ce processus ensemble. Donc, je n'ai rien à ajouter à ce sujet. Pour le reste, adressez-vous à Washington.

At the NATO meeting you just made reference to, you were asked about protectionism; you said that PESCO was not a protectionist vehicle. Do you think that it is odd that the United States are making protectionist complaints about the EU defence initiative, given their talk of steel tariffs? Secondly, for PESCO to be successful in the long term, are you worried about the sort of level of European research and development funds? Do Member States need to increase their R&D budgets to make the ambitions of PESCO a reality long term?

The first question seems to be a suggestion of interpretation. So I will take it on board; it is an interesting angle to consider. But definitely I can say loud and clear what I said already in the NATO Ministerial Meeting and publicly several times, and you will hear the same from all my colleagues in the Commission: the European Union has no protectionist policy whatsoever. Not in the field of defence, neither in other fields. This is not our policy. On the contrary, we are and we stay committed to an open international system of trade, and I think we have proven that very powerfully and consistently with all the different agreements we continue to be engaged in and are finalising even recently.

So, protectionism is not the European Union policy, it continues not to be and we will not engage down that road. We definitely do not have that kind of approach. For other players, or policies, it is not for me to comment on but indeed, we will have discussions on repercussions that other decisions can have on European interests in different fields. But protectionism is never the European approach.

PESCO and the strengthening of the European defence in general is the way to guarantee that European Union Member States, including the majority of NATO allies, spend and invest in the field of defence, including research, in an effective manner. It is not for us, in the European Union, to determine how much Member States invest in defense, including on research in the field of defence, this is a national decision that is in the hands of national parliaments and national governments.

Obviously, the NATO allies have a target that they have decided themselves. Other EU Member States that are not NATO allies have different criteria. It is not for the EU institutions to say how much Member States should spend, but what we can do and what we are currently doing, is to make sure that whatever they decide to invest, is done in an effective manner, which means that - I referred to this hundreds of times - we work on the output gap. I quote the number again. We, in the European Union, invest 50% of what the Americans invest in defence, but our output collectively is 15%.

The European Union can work on this output gap, making sure that for every single euro that European Member States invest in defence, including on research, the output is maximised, so that we work on economies of scale. This is what we are doing: making investments efficient and effective. At the end of the day, I think this is what is interesting also for NATO and for different NATO allies that are not European Member States, because at the end of the day, you can increase your spending, but if you increase your spending in fields that are not productive of outputs, then the operational results are not that interesting for the Alliance or for defence purposes.

This is quite strange, because most of the times the European Union is accused of being bureaucratic and answering always on how much we spend on this, without saying what the result is. I can paraphrase that and say: the work we are doing now is not on how much to spend, but how many results we get out of the money spent. How much is a national decision for Member States.

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