



**The Chairman of the EU Military Committee
General Claudio GRAZIANO**



“The challenges to the EU Defence”

Intervention at 16th CSDP High Level Course "Jean Rey"

Thank you Colonel (*Christophe de Hemptinne, Director*).

And good morning everyone.

First of all, congratulations on your selection to attend this prestigious course. As I can see, a very diversified class, with attendance from several nations and organizations who, in spite of the challenges posed by the coronavirus, managed to be here for this unique opportunity.

My foremost advice is to take the most out of this course, plugging into the very core of EU Defence matters, but also establishing a network you shall maintain when back in the office, for your best benefit and that of the institutions you serve.

I briefly mentioned the challenges stemming from the coronavirus outbreak.

Well, in this regard, I would like you all to stop a second and picture yourself one year ago: how much has the world around you changed since then? And how much have you, and we all have changed, since then?

But if you look at the world with a bird's-eye view, you will notice the magnitude of new global, common challenges, like the economic recession, or the job market crisis. All driving to a general lack of certainties, particularly in terms of security, as a fundamental requirement for our societies to grow.

In this context, as surely mentioned by yesterday's distinguished speaker, Mme Sofie From Emmersberg, chair of the PSC, the EU has undertaken an ambitious journey, since a long time: become a reliable Security Provider and Partner at global scale, as highlighted in the Global Strategy launched in 2016.

Since then - I must say - a road covered of successes, but also studded of challenges, coming from all directions, including from within the EU itself.

For those who may be not familiar with it, let me start with a note on the role of the EUMC, the Committee I chair, composed of the 27 EU CHODs who convene personally, or through their MilReps, to bring the end-user perspective and the military voice in all relevant EU decision-making processes.

Inter alia, the MC is responsible for defining the requirements for EU military needs, in accordance with the agreed LoA, providing a unique expertise, in coordination with other pertinent bodies, like the PSC.

Myself, as Chairman, I am also the spokesperson of the Committee and the primary point of contact for military CSDP Operations and Missions.

All this, of course, puts me in the best position to properly support the HR/VP, Mr Borrell, as his Advisor for all Defence and Security matters.

Being the highest military authority in the EU Institutions, as I said, I am obviously deeply involved in all discussion regarding the ongoing crises. Like in Berlin, last month, in the presence of EU Ministers of Defence.

On that occasion, we all concurred - once more - that the real effects of the current pandemic have yet to be fully understood and measured.

The crisis has amplified existing threats, like malign activities by failed and rogue states and non-state entities, disinformation, hybrid and cyberattacks, but also brought new threats, with uncertainty and challenges that cannot be tackled solely by diplomatic means.

The ongoing crises in Libya, in the East Mediterranean Sea, in Byelorussia, in Armenia or in Azerbaijan tell us how complicated and intertwined is the security scenario around us, also in our very close neighbourhood. A scenario that calls for an urgent, integrated approach by the main stakeholders, by Europe - as meant in the Global Strategy - using all instruments of power.

We had known this for a while, now: no crisis can be solved with pure military actions, but no crisis can be solved without military means.

As also expressed by the EU political leadership, in fact, as Europeans we must learn how to use the language of power, and implement it. Hard power, in combination with soft power, in a more transversal and integrated approach.

This translates in our daily activities, conducting our CSDP activities.

In the slide you can see where the EU is currently engaged, in three continents (Europe, Africa and Asia). As military we are involved in 3 executive operations and 3 non-executive missions.

I will give you a quick overlook, starting from the oldest operation, ALTHEA, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, aimed at contributing to a safe and secure environment, providing Capacity-Building and collective training to local Armed Forces and supporting the overall EU comprehensive strategy for the country. ALTHEA, I want to underline, is the flagship of EU-NATO cooperation in terms of military operations, active under the so-called "Berlin Plus" agreement.

Moving south, we have Operation IRINI, launched to implement the UNSC Resolution on the arms embargo in Libya, while maintaining some of the tasks from SOPHIA, the former EU Operation in the Mediterranean, like disruption of the business model of illegal smuggler and arms and human traffickers, and training the Libyan coastguard, building its capacity to counter illegal activities.

Then, Operation ATALANTA in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, which has achieved excellent operational results over the 10 years, protecting World Food Programme transports and other vulnerable shipping from piracy. The operation also offers a vital platform for cooperation with Third States.

One element that stands out is that there is a Capacity Building component in all the operations I mentioned. In fact, while NATO focusses on Collective Defence, the EU has found its autonomous space, playing an effective role in helping countries to walk back on their legs, using all the tools at its disposal.

Of course, this is even more valid for the non-executive activities, EU Military Training Missions, in Mali, Central African Republic and Somalia, which are born specifically to cover the Capacity Building objective, providing training to the local armed forces and advice to the military leadership.

But beside our missions and operations, in the unfortunate circumstances we are living in, the military tool proved also indispensable in supporting civilian authorities to contain the pandemic, thanks to its unique capabilities and capacity to act where others cannot, also bringing the deterrence necessary to establish the security conditions, allowing others to intervene.

Now. After few months since the pandemic erupted, we have our first lessons.

Overall, the way we dealt with the whole situation can be considered positive, but there are areas where we could have done more, or better.

In particular, I look at the role of the EU military chain of command as coordinator of efforts by different stakeholders, and supporter to the civil organizations. Or in the cooperation with NATO, where more improvements could be definitely achievable.

With more efficient and already-in-place mechanisms, for instance, we could provide more assets for evacuation, medical aid, or better support the host country of our CSDP activities with additional advising and equipment.

But we could have done more also by further contributing to the already ongoing missions and operations, supporting them with adequate resources, especially in these difficult circumstances.

In this sense, the pandemic has highlighted the need to re-think about our capacity to respond and manage exceptional crisis situations.

I am thinking, first of all, about the ongoing revision of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability, at the moment still limited to a partial control, but in the future able to fully coordinate missions and operations of increasing magnitude.

Reaching this capacity will mean establishing a unique, dedicated, permanent EU operation HQ at military strategic level, here in Brussels, with all the related and compelling requirements, in terms of infrastructure and IT equipment.

Once approved, the new entity shall not fall short in Force generation, for the sake of credibility of the whole EU Defence project.

In a future scenario that has all the potential to be less secured than today, in fact, we shall aim to be military even better prepared and equipped to prevent crises or be able to tackle them more timely, allowing other instruments of power to properly act or react.

This means building resilience in the military dimension, a fundamental enabler for the Common Security Foreign Policy, in complementarity with Resilience in all main dimension of EU interest, as stated by the political leadership: social and economic, geopolitical, green and digital.

In order to achieve this ambitious objective, we have the imperative to fully implement the defence initiatives we have launched.

As I mentioned earlier, in 2016, with the Global Strategy the EU kicked off the ambitious mission of becoming a reliable Security Provider, at a global scale.

The Global Strategy listed three initial, demanding tasks: responding to external conflicts and crises, contributing to the capacity building of our partners, and protecting the Union and its citizens.

In line with this enhanced LoA, we revamped the existing concept of EU Strategic Autonomy: not autonomy from someone, but autonomy to do something alone, if necessary.

Of course, such an "ambitious" LoA needed new mechanisms to identify and grant the EU of Defence the necessary tools to deliver, credibly, starting with the definition of the Headline Goals (of which my Committee is responsible), i.e. what we want to be able to do militarily, and with what instruments.

Including the High Impact Capability Goals, the most strategic tools.

Then, we launched the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), a map of what the EU MS have in their inventory or are willing to spend or procure, eventually available for EU purposes.

And here we encountered the first internal challenges.

In fact, the CARD process highlights that MS still place the needs for the EU Defence as last, well after national and NATO requirements. This approach, as you can easily understand, proves a lack of concrete motivation to fully support the EU project in the defence domain.

Needless to say, this has an effect on follow-on steps, like encouraging MS to join another cornerstone project, the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) a very useful tool for

cooperation, supporting the developing and acquiring defence capabilities, but also by making those capabilities easily available for EU military missions and operations.

The PESCO project, though, is still a relatively young initiative and the ongoing review is looking at improving its effectiveness.

Another related aspect to work on, is the fact that, being closed to third countries, PESCO may lose its attractiveness for engaging in much more consistent programs.

All this brings me to the most crucial initiative expressed by the EU, the European Defence Fund (EDF), a dedicated budget for research, innovation, development of prototypes and acquisition of defence equipment/technology.

A truly unique initiative! In fact, the EU is the only organization that has the capacity to craft powerful collective initiatives, but also to provide the financial means to sustain them.

Although the final budget allocated by the EU for the EDF has eventually dropped from the initial 13 to 7 billion, we can still count on an acceptable amount of funds, which now requires a swift and strong engagement by EU institutions and MS, in order to be employed at best.

Moreover, we must absolutely avoid the risk of missing a key opportunity to support the whole EU defence project, including providing a benefit to the European defence industrial base, with its Small and Medium Enterprises, and so reducing the EU dependency from external suppliers.

The next few months will be crucial for the EU Defence, which, in my opinion, may be well on track to gain the full status of credible, global security provider, based on two main considerations:

Firstly, because it's the only organization owning a well-recognised, complete set of tools (politic, diplomatic, military and economic), for a true integrated approach to crisis management.

Secondly, because the results achieved so far have been widely acknowledged by the international community, which is demanding even more EU engagement.

We have an opportunity, here, and the EU can't fail, as there are no realistic alternatives to Europe. If a risk for failure is spotted, we must act immediately and decisively, for the sake of credibility of the EU foreign policy.

What we need is the choral response by MS to fully exploit and support EU initiatives, both in terms of capabilities and CSDP activities.

The first opportunity lays in the need to provide our CSDP operations and missions, which often run in much contested areas, the necessary personnel, assets and capabilities, to allow the achievement of the agreed mandates.

Secondly, we must maintain our commitment to the EU budget, and avoid that it gets infected by the virus. While the ongoing economic crisis, associated with the recession caused by the

pandemic, is foreseen to probably last some more time, we shall resist the impetus to exercise severe cuts, as this will be detrimental for our Level of Ambition and credibility.

Concurrently, much effort should be spent for strategic tools in priority areas, like Power and Force Projection, or Non-Kinetic Engagement Capabilities, but also to counter hybrid threats, including disinformation and cyber-attacks, very critical areas for our societies.

We will also need to strengthen our capacity of action outside Europe: the European Peace Facility, recently financed with 5 billion euro (also here, less than the 8 initially proposed), is meant to provide support to military activities, similarly to what we do with the civilian counterpart.

The implementation of the EPF shall increase the effectiveness of CSDP missions and operations, covering their common costs, giving the Union the capability to contribute to the financing of military peace support operations. But also carry out broader actions, like assisting the building of capacities of partner countries' armed forces to address security challenges.

At the same time, we shall keep investing on our global partnerships.

With NATO, for really strategic activities, like exercises and military mobility, the latter being the leading activity in EU-NATO cooperation, for which we duly take note that the final budget allocated dropped from an initial proposal of 6.5 billion to 1.5 billion, unfortunately.

Furthermore, with NATO we should also continue the alignment between the respective defence planning processes, remembering that what is good for EU is also good for NATO, in accordance with the principle of the "single set of forces", and that a stronger EU makes NATO stronger.

Beside NATO, though, we have to foster even more fruitful relations with all our partners across the globe, Asia in particular, as we share with them many areas of concerns, about which we are running extensive dialogue for further cooperation in the security domain.

Only by engaging in all the mentioned activities, with a committed and harmonised approach by MS, speaking with a single voice, we will overcome the internal challenges and be able - as Europeans - to build-up a EU Strategic Culture of Defence.

Strategic Culture as a common way of looking at the world, by defining common threats and challenges, and how to address them together.

But Strategic Culture also as the institutional confidence and processes to make use of military forces as a legitimate policy instrument.

All the above considerations will converge into the elaboration of our next cornerstone document: the Strategic Compass, a document that shall explain in details which security and defence responsibilities the EU wants to take on board, through CSDP activities and other policies, for which purposes, through which operations (executive and non-executive).

In order to really have an impact on the CSDP, the Strategic Compass should also lead to a new Headline Goal, routing the next iteration of the various EU initiatives, in order to decide which coherent full spectrum of forces we want, allowing the EU to address the required LoA.

Work on the SC has already initiated, with the drafting of a shared analysis of threats.

And I conclude.

2020 is and will be remembered as a crucial year for the EU Defence.

With a security scenario characterised by an increasing number of crises, the requirements for improving our defence capacity has been amplified exponentially.

While I believe it is absolutely vital that we all recognise security as a paramount requirement for our societies to develop and grow, and that the EU has a primary responsibility to play, cutting funds for security and defence, in such an historical moment, will have serious repercussions in the near term.

Therefore, our unfettered military advice is that encouraging MS to properly support and resource the EU defence and security project shall remain among the top EU priorities.

Thank you very much, and I am ready for your questions and doubts, if any.