

THE CHAIRMAN  
OF THE  
EUROPEAN UNION MILITARY COMMITTEE



***End of Mandate Report***

**06 November 2015 – 05 November 2018**

**General Mikhail Kostarakos**





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**End of Mandate Report**

The 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2018 marks the end of my three-year tenure as the Chairman of the European Union Military Committee (EUMC). During these years, the words "security" and "defence" regained their position in the European Union's vocabulary. In the three years that have gone by, what has been achieved can be described as ground-breaking. Echoing the High Representative of the Union for foreign and security policy/Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), Madam Mogherini, *"more has been achieved these years than in the last ten"*. The EUMC played a key role, within the framework of its responsibilities. Its engagement followed multiple strands of work.

**BACKGROUND**

In 2015, the European Union capstone document in the security and defence domain was the European Security Strategy (ESS) of 2003. Six CSDP Missions and Operations were deployed, whose activities were partially funded by the Athena mechanism. The latter had certain limitations on what could be funded, resulting in some cases to operational dead-ends. The European Union (EU) and NATO were two strangers in the same city, their cooperation being substantially limited to the six-monthly formal EU-NATO Military Committees common meetings, dedicated to Operation ALTHEA. The latter's importance aside, its being carried out with recourse to NATO assets and capabilities under the Berlin Plus arrangements was regarded by many as the only reason justifying these meetings. The aforementioned more or less summarise the EU engagement in the security and defence domain.

The inadequacy of this engagement became evident, under the light of the dramatic geopolitical developments in the adjacent and neighbouring to the EU regions. The Arab uprising, the wars in Libya, Syria and Iraq, the emergence of the self-proclaimed Islamic State, the terrorist attacks on European soil and the large numbers of immigrants and refugees that have crossed the EU external borders, shaped a new reality that had little to nothing in common with the geopolitical situation as described in the ESS. Change was not just needed; it was demanded by the European citizens, as security became the number one concern.

The presentation of the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) by the HR/VP, Madam Mogherini, in June 2016 marked the beginning of the change. A vision for the EU was offered, along with the path that would lead there. With that, the EU entered a new era, an era where security and defence became one

of its top priorities. The EUMC, being the custodian of military expertise, was invited to assist in the strenuous effort to build "[...] a Europe that protects, [...] and defends" and to restore the feeling of security to our traumatised citizens.

### **STRUCTURES-TOOLS-FINANCING**

The issue of effective Command and Control of the ongoing CSDP military activities is of high importance. The scheme that was in place when I assumed my position had certain problems and generated unnecessary risks; therefore it called for immediate attention and corrective measures. The EUMC engaged early on in the discussions about the entity that would replace it and assume positive control over EU CSDP military activities, offering its best and solid advice deriving from its accumulated experience. In view of the need to provide solutions to a pressing problem, a permanent planning and conduct capability for non-executive EU military missions, under the title "Military Planning and Conduct Capability" was established in Brussels, as a short term objective, assuming responsibility at the military-strategic level for the planning and conduct of the EU's three non-executive military missions. The EUMC understood the temporary and interim character of MPCC as it stood and continued to provide options for its further evolution. The November 2016 Council Conclusions serve as a guiding light for the desired end-state, which is the development of a permanent planning and conduct capability for all categories of military CSDP missions and operations. The positive results from this organisational change are already apparent. Deliberations on the future of the MPCC and its phased development into a true OHQ are ongoing, in the context of its planned review before the end of 2018.

Linked to the ongoing military missions and operations, we have noted persistent challenges in force generation. Our military CSDP engagement remains largely under-resourced, which affects their effectiveness and increases operational risks. This remains a matter of concern. Another point of concern has been the lack of a tool equivalent to the EU battlegroups in the maritime domain. Considering the level of dependence of the EU on the maritime domain, it is of great concern that this lack has not yet been addressed, although two out of three EU CSDP military engagements of executive nature are in the maritime domain. As CEUMC, I have tried to raise awareness by proposing the creation of a maritime "Battlegroup".

The increase of the defence cooperation among Member-States and the optimisation of their respective efforts have also enjoyed special interest from the EU side. The EU, as a whole, lacks a number of defence-related capabilities, some of them critical, a reality that puts certain limits to its capability to act autonomously and to satisfy the agreed political Level of Ambition. Through the Headline Goal process, the EUMC has provided an updated analysis of the military capabilities that are required in this context, including the High Impact Capability Goals, which were taken into account in the 2018 EU Capability Development Priorities and agreed as part of the 2018 Capability Development Plan review.

In order to remedy this situation a number of initiatives have been launched. Instruments such as Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and the European Defence Plan (EDAP) that includes the European Defence Industry Development Programme (EDIDP), the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the European Peace Facility (EPF) have been or are going to be launched. Originating either from the European Council or the European Commission, they all have the same objective: to facilitate the exchange of information and the coordination of national defence planning, to maximise economies of scale, to make European defence Research and Development a favourable option and to promote joint procurements. The EUMC has been engaged in the majority of these and other defence-related initiative by offering solid military advice during the designing stages, making sure that the views of the end-user of military capabilities are taken into consideration and reflected in the decisions taken.

The more complex and interconnected military capability planning landscape has led to a proposal to establish a 4-year planning cycle. This will better serve our needs and connect with the existing NATO Defence Planning Process. Regarding PESCO, it is worth mentioning military mobility as one of the key projects that has been initiated. It intends to enable swift movement of military personnel and assets across Europe to areas where they are needed. Military mobility is an example of an EU security and defence initiative that relies on key input from Member States and engagement by the EU Commission while also being coherent with NATO priorities.

Adequate funding is a decisive factor for successful engagement. The EU, an economic giant, runs six military CSDP Missions and Operations. Unfortunately, their success has been hampered by funding limitations, attributed to their nature. This awkward situation seriously undermined the credibility of the EU as a security provider, opening at the same time a backdoor to other actors to take advantage of our limitations and establish their presence in the area. A number of proposals have been drafted by the EUMC, seeking workable solutions to this dead-end. The proposed European Peace Facility (EPF) that will merge a number of now available EU financing tools such as APF, IcSP, FPI and hopefully the Athena mechanism, may prove to be more efficient for the military.

### **DEEPENING DEFENCE COOPERATION-PARTNERING**

This brings me to another significant strand of work during my tenure: the strengthening of the EU-UN relations in the security and defence domain. In this context, the EUMC invited the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Lacroix and the Military Advisor of the UN, General Loitey to attend a special session of the Military Committee at Chiefs of Defence level in May 2018, in order to initiate a high-level discussion on the EU-UN partnership on peacekeeping and crisis management. The acceptance of this invitation by the latter and his speech at the Military Committee present a step forward to bringing EU and UN closer.

Almost immediately after the presentation of the EUGS, a Joint EU-NATO declaration was signed in Warsaw by the President of the European Council Donald Tusk, the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker and Secretary General of NATO Jens Stoltenberg. It formally inaugurated a deepened cooperation between the two leading international organisations in Europe. A common set of 42 specific actions (soon increased to 74) were identified, aiming in putting flesh to the bone of this deepened cooperation and to increase the output of the respective missions and operations. In the same spirit but independent of the Joint Declaration and its provisions, it was decided that the number of the meetings between the respective Military Committees would be doubled, the existing formals being complemented by informal meetings, two of which have successfully been held so far. This has not been an easy task, due to problems of political nature that are consistently raised by a certain NATO non-EU member. Flexibility and persistence need to be demonstrated in order to overcome these problems and continue on this positive trend.

Further promoting the EU-US cooperation, US military Commanders based in Europe have been frequently invited to participate in EU Military Committees at Chiefs of Defence level, pursuing the strengthening of our relations. This has been achieved both at the strategic level, at the top, and at tactical level, on the ground. CEUMC's regular participation in the US Chiefs of Defence Conference has also contributed to closer cooperation.

One of the main messages of the EUGS is about partnerships: the acknowledgement that the capabilities of any international actor have limits. No single country or organisation is strong enough to address persisting or rising security challenges on its own. The best –if not the sole– way for the international community to achieve this is through partnering and cooperating. This acknowledgement, combined with the "single set of forces" pressing problem faced by the EU Member-States, led the CEUMC to actively promote partnering for its Missions and Operations and to attract like-minded nations to participate in them. The endeavour delivered positive results, as no less than four nations (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Jordan, Pakistan, South Korea) expressed their interest in joining forces. Other countries, such as Egypt and Vietnam are considering their participation in practical terms. China has also shown openness to discuss ways of possible military cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

The importance of the Asian region to the EU is self-evident and the Council has endorsed enhanced security cooperation in and with this region and an expansion of military-to-military contacts. This is the reason for the CEUMC's extensive engagement with the main actors in the region. The Chairman's official visits to the Republic of China, Myanmar (twice), Pakistan and Vietnam are a testimony to this. In specific occasions, CEUMC provided a dedicated and excellent, sometimes even the only, channel of communication with the ruling authorities. A channel used either to establish a certain level of dialogue or to convey to certain

regimes (such as Myanmar's) the EU authorities' messages and concerns related to behaviour that delineates from or is against globally accepted standards

### **TRAINING-EDUCATION-GENDER**

The EU undoubtedly profits from its multinational character. The pluralism and the diversity of the cultures and traditions represented by the people working in the institutions is beyond doubt one of its main strengths. The same can be argued for the military personnel, with one observation: in the unique environment of the Armed Forces, a specific identity needs also to be present, a military identity that will act as the connecting glue. An European military identity. In that respect, the EUMC joined forces with the European Security and Defence College (ESDC) to propose and support the idea of an Advanced Modular Training (AMT) course, aiming at creating the aforementioned European Military identity. The first AMT pilot course, designed to provide senior Officers and civilian personnel posted in the EU institutions or directly involved in CSDP with the right knowledge, skills and competences to perform their duties, was organised last year (2017-2018) and the results are more than encouraging. In the same context, the, so-called, military Erasmus, a programme that aims to pave the way for a European security and defence culture by promoting the short-term exchange of young officers, has been strongly supported by the EUMC.

In this respect, it is also worth mentioning that on the initiative of the CEUMC and taking into consideration the recommendations of the EU Military Training Group (EUMTG), the ESDC is currently working to the finalisation of the Sectoral Qualifications Framework for all levels of the military officer career (SQF-MILOF) through a dedicated working group (SQF-MILOF WG) composed of national representatives, which convenes under the auspices of the ESDC and will act in close coordination with the EUMS. When finalised, the SQF-MILOF will enable the harmonisation of minimum learning requirements/ outcomes for the military officer profession among the Member States, also promoting the development of educational programmes and course curricula within them.

The EUMC put an emphasis in training. It regards it as a key instrument in order both to further the knowledge capital of military personnel and to provide EU and national institutions with staff that have a common background. In close cooperation with the ESDC, it proposed and supported the launch of new courses, specifically designed to fill identified needs and to supplement the existing ones. In this context, the "Integration of a Gender Perspective in CSDP" course has been added in the ESDC annual training program.

The example used is not by coincidence. The EUMC deeply believes in the added value and the positive effect on performance that the integration of the gender perspective will bring to crisis-management and peace-building. In fact, this issue and the possible actions to facilitate larger female participation in our respective Missions and Operations featured in my discussions with the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Lacroix and the Military Advisor of the UN, General

Loitey, at the side-lines of the United Nations Chief of Defence Conference in New York, in July 2017. I have also communicated to our EU commanders, underlining the opportunity for missions and operations to export our values of gender respect and adherence to practices in line with international humanitarian law. Examples set by European troops should serve as inspiration to all other actors that we interact with and must employ a zero tolerance policy towards any transgressions of sexual nature.

### **VISIBILITY-STRATCOM**

The strong interest of third states to participate in EU CSDP Missions and Operations can largely be attributed to the EUMC's outward leaning policy. The visibility of the Committee was increased through numerous appearances and speeches or lectures in high level conferences or international security-themed fora. CEUMC has spared no opportunity to appear in front of diverse audiences and explain them the vision of the EU. No less than 130 speeches, lectures or articles have been delivered or published in more than 40 countries. Especially the period immediately after the presentation of the EU Global Strategy and when all sorts of speculation were extensively reproduced, this active engagement helped relay the correct messages. Many of these invitations came from national Defence Colleges and Universities.

What has to be underlined is the interest of the academia and of civilian universities to inform and educate their audiences on the EU security and defence activities and to receive first-hand information on the way the military fits in the whole EU picture, inviting the most authoritative authority on this subject, the EUMC. This is regarded as a major breakthrough, as it offers us a unique opportunity to engage directly with society and, especially with the most dynamic part of it, the youth and dilute any false impressions that may be.

The EU Delegations worldwide play a very important role, representing the Union. The composition of their staff though, does not represent every element of its Smart power. The absence of a representative of the military who would inform and support the Head of the respective Delegation on defence-related issues is obvious. The advantages of including a Military Advisor to EU Delegations were highlighted in a paper issued by the EUMC. This CEUMC's recommendation was presented to and agreed by the EUMC and was positively received by the EEAS. An EEAS document on this subject has been recently cleared by the HR/VP and will be soon presented to the Member-States in the PSC. Hopefully soon, the first Military Advisors will report for duty at selected Delegations, promoting the international image of the EU as a global, in not just the geographical sense of the term, power.

### **STIMULATE RECOGNITION**

Following the loss of a member of EUTM Mali during a terrorist attack, the EUMC raised the issue of appropriate recognition and honouring to the dead in

Brussels. It is considered as a humble, symbolic action which all the same is of immense moral value to the relatives and the colleagues of the deceased. A humble tribute that we in Brussels, representing our Member-States, owe to those who make the ultimate sacrifice while serving (or as a consequence of their service) in the EU CSDP Missions and Operations, promoting security and defence for us.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The three years of my tenure have been extremely full, fascinating, productive and rewarding. I witnessed the unique moments of the transformation of the EU to an integrated global actor and a credible and predictable security provider. I take pride from the fact that we, the military, contributed to this transformation and that we are offered an opportunity to provide more to the European citizens. I feel that this has been very much appreciated by the political leaderships and the citizens of Europe. We will continue to do so, according to the tasking we get from our political leadership; we will continue to provide our best advice and recommendation, based upon the expertise we have. In the sensitive domains of security and defence, there is no place for experimentation.

I remain confident that the current impetus that drives defence-related European efforts will remain strong and actually materialise the vision of a stronger Europe. Because we deserve it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Kostarakos', written in a cursive style.

General Mikhail Kostarakos