

# Remarks by the HR/VP Federica Mogherini at the press conference

*Check against delivery!*

Today in the College we had a very good and useful discussion on the European Union defence and security work.

This is a field that is top priority for European Union citizens. You see it every day, but you also see it in all opinion polls across the European Union territory, no matter what Member State, no matter what political orientation. European Union citizens put a high priority on the European Union's work on security and defence. There are high expectations from our citizens, strong political will, the EU Treaty offering the right and powerful instruments – not always and not yet fully used.

And so we had an initiative together with Vice-President [of the European Commission, Jyrki] Katainen and obviously with the strong steer by the President [of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker] to bring also the [European] Commission reflection on the future of the European Union on board of this work that is ongoing on the future – and the present – of the European Union security and defence.

It is not only a reflection on the future, but it is also a current work that is ongoing. Those of you who follow the work we do on defence on the other side of the street know that very well. And I will try to give you the broader picture and the general sense of direction and then leave to Jyrki [Katainen] the details on the reflection paper we will adopt on 7 June and the work we are doing on the European Defence Action Plan and the European Defence Fund.

The work in the European Union and across the institutions for the first time is moving fast and forward on security and defence. Just last week with the EU Defence Ministers we decided to establish the first Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) that will take over command of the EU training missions within the EU Military Staff – decision taken unanimously at 28.

We also agreed just last week to work on the governance of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO): one of the provisions of the treaties that was never put in place on security and defence, now identifying the projects that will be potential elements of a Permanent Structured Cooperation. We have decided with Ministers of Defence to remove the financial obstacles to the deployment of the EU Battlegroups – just to give you a sense of how fast and how substantially the work on defence is moving already now.

And this is why the paper we have discussed today on the future of the European Union defence does not take into consideration keeping the status quo or even doing less, but envisages different elements of a menu doing more and doing better together in the field of defence, because we see a clear

political will, a clear indication from our citizens that this is the way to go and this is exactly what we are already doing in our daily work.

Second point I would like to make is that this work is done in full coordination with NATO and I say this ahead of a special day tomorrow. It will be a special day for the EU institutions. We will be happy to host President [of the United States of America, Mr Donald] Trump, but also other presidents like the President [of France, Mr Emmanuel] Macron.

We have developed in the last six, seven months together with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg 42 different actions in 7 different fields where the European Union and NATO have started to cooperate concretely, operationally as we say when tackle military and defence issues, from maritime security to cyber security, to hybrid threats and the list continues.

The Secretary General and myself will report to our respective councils in a couple of weeks from now, jointly. This to highlight how the strengthening of the European Union work in defence in the present and in the future goes very strongly hand-in-hand with strengthening of NATO. For the European Union it is clear that a strong European Union in the field of security and defence makes NATO stronger and a strong NATO is key to European, but also to American security. I want to make this clear ahead of tomorrow that will also be an important day on this side of Brussels.

This simply because the work we can do through the European Union's means – and Jyrki will elaborate more on that – to support Member States in developing military capabilities will enable Member States to spend better by spending together and this is something that the European Union can support. Actually this is something that only the European Union can support here in Europe and so this is the way for a more efficient way of investing in defence and also in strengthening the development of capabilities in Europe.

Today we started here in the [European] Commission a very important, ambitious, pragmatic and realist reflection. I would say that this is the first time – correct me if I am wrong – that the Commission and the College take such a strong interest and such an active role in supporting the Member States' ambitions on defence and security, with future options to strengthen this ongoing work on European Union security and defence, including using all the instruments that the European Commission can mobilise – and again Jyrki will elaborate on this file. It is a good example of institutions working tougher, putting together all the instruments we have, including the financial ones.

Thank you.

**Link to the video:**

<https://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I139221>