

Observatory 34

EU – NATO Relationship

The Council of Presidents of the Eurodefense Network meeting in Lisbon on 17th June 2021 decided to establish an Observatory on EU – NATO Relations, No. 34. The Observatory will be chaired by Eurodefense – United Kingdom and will monitor the joint declarations and other steps in this relationship aiming at identifying concrete and effective developments.

Background Note

Relations between NATO and the EU were institutionalised in the early 2000s, building on steps taken during the 1990s to promote greater European responsibility in defence matters. At that time, the Western European Union (WEU) was acting for the European Union in the area of security and defence (1992 Maastricht Treaty). The WEU's crisis-management role was transferred to the European Union in 1999.

The 2002 NATO-EU Declaration on a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) reaffirmed EU assured access to NATO's planning capabilities for the EU's own military operations.

In 2003, the so-called "Berlin Plus" arrangements, originally established by the WEU in 1996, set the basis for the Alliance to support EU-led operations in which NATO as a whole is not engaged.

At the 2010 Lisbon Summit, the Allies underlined their determination to improve the NATO-EU strategic partnership. The 2010 Strategic Concept committed the Alliance to working more closely with other international organisations to prevent crises, manage conflicts and stabilise post-conflict situations.

In Warsaw in July 2016, the two organisations outlined areas for strengthened cooperation in light of common challenges to the east and south, including countering hybrid threats, enhancing resilience, defence capacity building, cyber defence, maritime security and exercises. As a follow-up, in December 2016, NATO foreign ministers endorsed a statement to which were annexed 42 common measures to advance NATO-EU cooperation. A further 32 measures were agreed in December 2017.

On 10 July 2018, in a joint declaration, the two organisations agreed to focus on swift progress in the areas of military mobility, counter-terrorism and strengthening resilience to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear-related risks as well as promoting the women, peace and security agenda.

Allied leaders welcomed this joint declaration at the Brussels Summit in July 2018 and tangible results achieved since 2016. The development of European defence capabilities,

while ensuring coherence and complementarity and avoiding unnecessary duplication, is key in joint efforts to make the Euro-Atlantic area safer and contributes to transatlantic burden-sharing.

Close cooperation between NATO and the EU is an important element in the development of an international "comprehensive approach" to crisis management and operations, which requires the effective application of both military and civilian means.

NATO and the EU currently have 21 member countries in common, and there are 7 European NATO members outside the EU.

Current developments

Sixth progress report on the implementation of the common set of proposals endorsed by EU and NATO Councils on 6 December 2016 and 5 December 2017 – 3 June 2021

The report elaborates on the progress achieved between June 2020 and May 2021 by demonstrating tangible deliverables in all areas of cooperation. It underlines that the long-standing EU-NATO partnership has made, what it claims to be *“unprecedented progress over the past five years, demonstrating and reinforcing the solidity of the transatlantic bond, and further consolidating its mutually-reinforcing strategic partnership to the benefit of all NATO allies and EU member states”*.

The Observatory will seek to identify and examine this progress

NATO Deputy Secretary General: new ambitions for NATO-EU cooperation – 28 June 2021

In an online event with the European Parliament, NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoană said that NATO's Brussels Summit had set *‘a new level of ambition’* for NATO-EU cooperation, *“including in areas such as resilience, new technologies, climate change, or strategic competition”*.

He further stressed the importance of *“strengthened political dialogue between NATO and the EU”* to *“foster transparency, trust and mutual situational awareness”*.

Currently, NATO and the EU are cooperating in more than seventy areas of work.

The Observatory will seek to examine these new ambitions and determine whether the more than seventy areas of work is too ambitious.

EU defence plans ‘can never replace’ NATO, says Stoltenberg – 5 September 2021

Calls for a new European military force following the withdrawal from Afghanistan must not undermine NATO's command structures or divert resources from the alliance, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg cautioned in an interview published on 5 September.

"Any attempt to establish parallel structures, duplicate the command structure, that will weaken our joint capability to work together, because with scarce resources we need to prevent duplication and overlapping efforts," Stoltenberg told the British Sunday Telegraph newspaper.

"I welcome more European efforts on defence but that can never replace NATO and we need to make sure that Europe and North America band together," Stoltenberg told the paper.

"Any attempt to weaken the bond between North America and Europe will not only weaken NATO, it will divide Europe."

EU Commission President, Ursula Von der Leyen promises to work with NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg on a new joint EU-NATO statement to be presented before the end of the year – (European Parliament State of the Union Address) - 15 September 2021

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The Observatory will be anticipating the future adoption of the EU's *Strategic Compass* in the Spring of 2022 and the *NATO Strategic Concept* in Summer next year.

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The Observatory currently has the active involvement of ED-UK, ED-France and ED Finland. Contributions and observations from other members of the Eurodefense network would be welcome.