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Hungary's KOVÁCS calls EU-NATO political deadlock
"unacceptable, illogical and irresponsible"

Paris, 3 December 2010 – The political deadlock between the EU and NATO was hindering both organisations, was "a luxury we cannot afford" and could not "be sustained any longer", **Mr Istvan KOVÁCS**, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the North Atlantic Council, said on Thursday.

Addressing the Assembly on behalf of the incoming EU Presidency, he said the situation was "unacceptable, illogical and irresponsible", and meant that the transatlantic community of 850 million people, which was based on the same values, interests and closely overlapping membership, could not "achieve its full potential".

Mr KOVÁCS added that Hungary would take practical measures during its presidency to ensure that "reciprocal steps and concessions" were taken by the NATO Secretary-General and EU High Representative.

In a wide-ranging speech, he stressed the need for common answers to the post-Lisbon Treaty era of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), but added that the new "provisions and institutions by themselves will not create the necessary political will required to implement them". "The drive has to come from our political leaders and national parliaments. They have to show creativity, boldness, and vision – in short, genuine leadership".

Outlining his priorities for Hungary's "supporting presidency" in the field of CFSP and CSDP, he said that the EU's primary partner in the international arena was the United Nations and that the EU-NATO strategic partnership was "indispensable to successful meet both the traditional and the new security challenges in a concerted manner".

In CFSP, he said 2011 could be "a decisive year" for the western Balkans provided that the EU stuck to its policy of enlargement, and that Hungary would focus its attention on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), as well as CSDP, the western Balkans and transatlantic relations. The next Eastern Partnership Summit under the ENP would be held in Budapest next May, he noted.

On the development of European capabilities, Mr KOVÁCS said the priorities would be to ensure close cooperation with the European Defence Agency (EDA) and the conclusion of "defence treaties" modelled on those signed recently between France and the United Kingdom. These were "a major development that can also be regarded as a good example of pooling and sharing capabilities" – the only alternative for small and medium-sized EU countries, he said.

Another main objective for the first half of 2011 would be to achieve synergies "through closer cooperation and interaction between the various actors and elements of civilian and military CSDP". This was a "very important challenge for the six months to come", he said. Africa was also becoming an increasingly important arena for CSDP, with civilian and military crisis-management operations clearly demonstrating this new commitment.

Turning to multinational initiatives outside the EU scope, he described the Strategic Airlift Capability involving the deployment of three C-17 aircraft at the Pápa base in Hungary which was owned by 12 NATO allies and two non-NATO EU countries (Sweden and Finland). Two of the NATO allies, the United States and Norway, were not EU members, he added. In reply to a question from the floor, Mr KOVÁCS said he would welcome the addition of two or three A400M aircraft at Pápa provided that other countries joined the cooperation effort.

Referring to the closure of WEU by next June, he said the ESDA has done a fantastic job over the years, and that "we must tell our children and grandchildren about it".

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