

European Council conclusions on security and defence, 22/06/2017

Internal security and the fight against terrorism

1. The European Council strongly condemns the recent terrorist attacks and stands united and firm in the fight against terrorism, hatred and violent extremism. These acts have strengthened our resolve to cooperate at EU level so as to enhance our internal security: we will fight the spread of radicalisation online, coordinate our work on preventing and countering violent extremism and addressing the ideology, thwart the financing of terrorism, facilitate swift and targeted exchanges of information between law enforcement authorities, including with trusted partners, and improve the interoperability between databases.

2. Industry has its own responsibility to help combat terrorism and crime online. Building on the work of the EU Internet Forum, the European Council expects industry to establish an Industry Forum and to develop new technology and tools to improve the automatic detection and removal of content that incites to terrorist acts. This should be complemented by the relevant legislative measures at EU level, if necessary. It calls for addressing the challenges posed by systems that allow terrorists to communicate in ways that competent authorities cannot access, including end-to-end encryption, while safeguarding the benefits these systems bring for the protection of privacy, data and communication. The European Council considers that effective access to electronic evidence is essential to combating serious crime and terrorism and that, subject to appropriate safeguards, the availability of data should be secured.

3. The agreement on the Entry/Exit System, which is expected shortly, and the finalisation before the end of the year of a European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) will pave the way for their rapid implementation, thus enhancing external border control and internal security while taking into account specific situations in Member States which still do not fully apply the Schengen acquis. In that context, the European Council invites the Commission to prepare, as soon as possible, draft legislation enacting the proposals made by the High Level Expert Group on interoperability.

4. We need to accelerate our collective efforts to share knowledge on foreign terrorist fighters as well as home-grown radicalised individuals and take forward policy and legal measures to manage the threat.

5. The European Council underlines the importance of providing support to the victims of terror acts.

External security and defence

6. The European Council reiterates its commitment to strengthening EU cooperation on external security and defence so as to protect the Union and its citizens and contribute to peace and stability in its neighbourhood and beyond. Together with all its diplomatic and civil capabilities, the EU brings a unique mix of possibilities to this enterprise. As reflected in the Council conclusions of 18 May and 19 June 2017, significant progress has been achieved in implementing the EU Global Strategy in the area of Security and Defence and the Joint Declaration signed in Warsaw by EU and NATO leaders. The transatlantic relationship and EU-NATO cooperation remain key to our overall security, allowing us to respond to evolving security threats, including cyber, hybrid and terrorism. The European Council welcomes the establishment in Helsinki of a European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats. The high-level conference on security and defence held in Prague on 9 June 2017 underlined both the complementarity between the EU and NATO and the need to step up European efforts to strengthen our defence related research, capabilities and operations.

7. The joint development of capability projects commonly agreed by Member States to fill the existing major shortfalls and develop the technologies of the future is crucial to fulfil the level of ambition of the EU approved by the European Council in December 2016. The European Council welcomes the Commission's communication on a European Defence Fund, composed of a research window and a capability window, and is looking forward to its swift operationalisation. It calls for rapid agreement on the proposal for a European Defence Industrial Development Programme with a view to its swift implementation, before more comprehensive programmes can be envisaged in the medium term. The European Council calls on Member States to identify suitable capability projects for the European Defence Fund and for the European Defence Industrial Development Programme. The European Council invites the Member States to further work on options for the joint procurement of capabilities within the

European Defence Fund based on sound financing mechanisms. The objective is to deliver capabilities, ensure a competitive, innovative and balanced basis for Europe's defence industry across the EU, including by cross border cooperation and participation of SMEs, and to contribute to greater European defence cooperation, by exploiting synergies and mobilising EU support in addition to Member States' financing. European defence industrial development will also require EU support for SME and intermediate (mid-cap) investments in the area of security and defence. In this respect, the European Council recalls its invitation to the European Investment Bank to examine steps with a view to supporting investments in defence research and development activities.

8. To strengthen Europe's security and defence in today's challenging geopolitical environment and to help reach the level of ambition of the EU expressed in the EU Global Strategy, the European Council agrees on the need to launch an inclusive and ambitious Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). A common list of criteria and binding commitments, fully in line with Articles 42(6) and 46 TEU and Protocol 10 to the Treaty - including with a view to the most demanding missions - will be drawn up by Member States within three months, with a precise timetable and specific assessment mechanisms, in order to enable Member States which are in a position to do so to notify their intentions to participate without delay. This work has to be consistent with Member States' national defence planning and commitments agreed within NATO and the UN by Member States concerned. Concrete collaborative projects and initiatives should also be identified in support of PESCO's common goals, commitments and criteria.

9. To strengthen the EU's rapid response toolbox, the European Council agrees that the deployment of Battlegroups should be borne as a common cost by the EU-managed Athena mechanism on a permanent basis. It also urges the Council to speed up its work on greater responsiveness of the civilian crisis management.

10. The European Council will come back to these issues at one of its next meetings.

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