

RECOMMENDATION 741¹

on European defence: pooling and strengthening national and European capabilities – reply to the annual report of the Council

The Assembly,

- (i) Noting with satisfaction the progress European countries, the European Union, NATO and WEU have made in adapting their military capabilities to the new international strategic environment;
- (ii) Stressing that they must persevere with this process at the political, budgetary and technical levels;
- (iii) Noting the absence of any progress on the framing of a common defence policy that goes beyond low-intensity crisis management;
- (iv) Calling upon the EU member states to overcome their differences and reach a compromise at the Intergovernmental Conference so as to inject fresh impetus into security and defence cooperation;
- (v) Considering that the new EU member states must be integrated in the ESDP structures as quickly as possible and that the possibility of participation in those structures by other European countries able to help strengthen Europe's intervention and military crisis management capabilities must remain open;
- (vi) Stressing the importance of maintaining a strong transatlantic link and cooperation with the United States on security and defence issues, while preserving and developing Europe's autonomy of decision-making and action;
- (vii) Considering that while national states are sovereign and are at the core of European defence efforts, they also carry the ultimate responsibility for developing joint European capabilities and ensuring that this process does not slow down or end in failure;
- (viii) Considering the desirability of launching a Europe-wide debate on defence budgets, a more rational use of resources and the setting up of a common fund for European forces, equipment and defence research and technology;
- (ix) Stressing the importance of involving the finance ministers and other relevant ministries in the debate on defence budgets;
- (x) Observing that notwithstanding the EU's declaration confirming that the headline goal forces are operational, they are not yet in a position to intervene effectively in the full spectrum of Petersberg tasks because of the continuing existence of shortfalls and the slowness of the decision-making procedures for deploying the relevant capabilities;
- (xi) Noting that despite all the efforts made over the last ten years, the armed forces of European countries are still suffering from major shortfalls in equipment and technology at national level, while at the same time they are overstretched and understaffed;
- (xii) Considering that the armaments and technology sector must give priority to equipment interoperability and that in so far as is possible, European countries should seek to procure equipment from European companies as a way of helping them to maintain and develop their activities;
- (xiii) Taking the view that the setting up of a credible joint European military intervention capability in the framework of the EU headline goal and the NATO Response Force (NRF) must be based on a common definition of doctrines and requirements and on the convergence of national defence postures in terms of the management and use of personnel and equipment;

¹ Adopted unanimously and without amendment by the Assembly on 3 December 2003 (10th sitting).

(xiv) Underlining to that end the importance of developing joint command structures and strengthening existing European multinational forces;

(xv) Stressing the need, with that in mind, to increase the number of joint training courses and exchanges between officers, and to conduct multinational exercises on a regular basis;

(xvi) Considering that the European Union should envisage the creation of a multinational, joint services European Security and Defence College where the emphasis would initially be on training headquarters staff and civilian personnel in the context of operations falling within the category of Petersberg tasks,

RECOMMENDS THAT THE COUNCIL INVITE ALL THE WEU COUNTRIES TO:

1. Continue with the process of adapting their armed forces to crisis management missions of the Petersberg type;
2. Give EU structures and the headline goal forces the means for autonomous decision-making and action;
3. Allocate funds, and establish rules for harmonising defence budgets among European countries, so that the EU has the resources it needs to achieve the headline goal and a common fund in order to finance operations, multinational headquarters and defence research and technology;
4. Implement a real European space policy for the purpose of exploiting space-based telecommunications, observation, navigation, listening and surveillance systems;
5. Set up a proper chain of command for EU operations which covers all the aspects necessary for mounting an operation at the strategic, operational planning and command levels;
6. Strengthen existing multinational forces so as to have access to a sufficient number of European multinational headquarters able to direct operations at theatre level (force commander);
7. Participate actively in the process that is being carried out under the European Capability Action Plan (ECAP), in particular by making a financial commitment to developments proposed by the various Project Groups;
8. Establish a real European defence industry policy to preserve Europe's strategic autonomy in the field of armaments, among other things by increasing the share of budgets allocated to defence research and technology;
9. Engage in an active policy of exchanges between European military schools, and establish a European defence college with a multinational, joint services intake with the aim of promoting higher training for officers and developing a common approach to a civil and military response to operations conducted in the ESDP framework;
10. Implement an active exercise policy in the EU framework, in which all the Union's politico-military, civil and military structures involved in crisis management should take part.