

(EU) WEU/DEFENCE: Stef Goris emphasises three key words: ambition, power and autonomy, which will enable Europe find its place on international stage

Brussels, 11/05/2005 (Agence Europe) - In a speech to be delivered on Tuesday 10 May at a seminar on the theme "European Union's Strategic Autonomy: Ambitions and Limits", at the Ecole Militaire in Paris, WEU Assembly President Stef Goris stresses the "true autonomy of decision and action" that Europe must conquer on the international scene.

It is Stef Goris' view that, "in order to be a player that is listened to, the EU needs political and military autonomy. It must assume political responsibility in a multipolar world where no European country can bring influence to bear on the power struggle". He went on to say that there is no real reason for the subtle distinction between Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) in the world of today given that foreign policy, which should above all aim to ensure the security of EU citizens and wealth, cannot be carried out in a valid way without being based on a "credible military system". The Belgian Liberal (VLD) goes on to add that ambition, power and autonomy are thus key words that will allow Europe to shake off its persistent paralysis in the international arena - despite the progress made over recent years. Autonomy of decision and action requires an independent command chain of NATO assets and capabilities and an intelligence ability at every level (research, exploitation and diffusion), the Assembly president stresses, urging for observation and listening satellites to be made available with coordinated management between member nations and centralised data processing from the current centre in Torrejon. Stef Goris also considers, however, that a real European Intelligence Agency should be created and permanent exploratory mechanisms developed (strategic reflection, assessment of operational needs and training and exercise policy).

Although, to date, the Atlantic Alliance remains the mandatory framework for collective defence and above all for cooperation with the United States as well as with the countries that do not belong to NATO or to the EU, Stef Goris stresses that "Americans no longer see NATO as the privileged framework for military engagement". He went on to explain that the "centre of gravity of their interest in the world is switching from the Atlantic to Asia".

European autonomy "must not be seen as a sort of challenge to the American leadership but as a natural and visionary evolution of the Alliance", the WEU Assembly president says. Stef Goris considers it "urgent" for an "economically and politically powerful Europe" to be built as a respected main ally and partner by the United States. But such a Europe must also develop "credible military capabilities" allowing it to act in an autonomous way in the defence of its interests in the world (especially so that it can, alone, ensure the stability of the European region), either because such interests cannot be fully superimposed on those of the United States or because the United States is busy on other fronts, President Goris continues, saying: "the EU must become a provider of external security, but not a world policeman".

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