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Diplomatic Advisor

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Admiral Willy HERTELEER  
President  
EURODEFENSE

E-mail: [secretairegeneralnet@eurodefensesense.net](mailto:secretairegeneralnet@eurodefensesense.net)

Dear Admiral Herteleer,

The President of the Commission, Mr José Manuel Barroso, asked me to thank you for your letter of 14 December and the attached note "Our Defence and Security at a Crossroads".

You refer to the economic and financial crisis having led to a reduction in defence spending in many EU member states and the impact this could have on the common EU capability to continue effectively to counter threats to our member states and their citizens. You are right to be concerned and your initiative to alert European citizens to these developments is to be applauded. This is an issue under close scrutiny by the European Parliament as highlighted by the report drawn up by rapporteur Krzysztof Lisek and adopted by AFET on 23 November.

In his reply to your same letter dated 6 January, Deputy Secretary General Maciej Popowski, on behalf of High Representative Baroness Catherine Ashton, outlined that EU defence ministers adopted a work program in November aimed at strengthening the common security and defence policy by working more closely together in light of diminishing resources. Together with member states, our services are working on implementing this work programme and will report back to the Council by the end of this semester. These issues have also been discussed with our NATO partners.

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As indicated by the High Representative, the foreign affairs council also encouraged further synergies between the European Defence Agency and the Commission, in particular in the field of research and technology. In October the Commission re-launched the inter-service task force on defence industry and markets, aiming to explore different policy options to further enhance the strength and competitiveness of the industry. The task force, which first met on 9 November, will look at better ways of coordinating our existing industrial and market policies to support a competitive defence industry that is delivering the cutting edge technology needed for Europe's security and defence.

We share your concerns and sense of urgency and our services are working hard to address them. Support from organisations such as yours and awareness amongst the wider public is essential in order to reach results, therefore I thank you again for your initiative.

Yours sincerely,



Hugo SOBRAL