



European Security and Defence Assembly Assembly of Western European Union

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Assembly in favour of strengthening the EU operations centre

Paris, 1 December 2010 – On Tuesday the European Security and Defence Assembly (ESDA) said it was in favour of strengthening the Operations Centre of the EU Military Staff for the planning and conduct of military operations.

Presenting a report on the planning and conduct of EU operations submitted jointly with Mr **Andrea RIGONI** (Italy, Liberal Group) on behalf of the Defence Committee, Mrs **Françoise HOSTALIER** (France, EPP/CD Group) underlined “the great complexity of the system and of the relations between the services” involved in crisis management.

Among the “potential improvements” put forward by the Assembly, she proposed that the EU Operations Centre should be “strengthened” and put on a “permanent footing” in Brussels. In the Assembly’s view, the new Operation Headquarters should be “staffed by a core of 45 to 50 permanent officers, to be strengthened in the event of the emergence of a crisis”. Mrs HOSTALIER stressed that such a permanent structure would make it possible to “review the current framework nation system which severely lacks responsiveness” and “give EU action its full force”.

The Assembly also recommends endowing the European External Action Service (EEAS) “with a military chain of command for crisis management which provides a direct link between the Operation Commander and Operation Headquarters (OHQ) and the political decision-makers”. The Assembly calls for continuing improvement of “the civil-military coordination of crisis management” and “a clear definition of the functions of the various EU bodies involved in crisis management and the relations between them”, which might make it possible to establish a civil-military Operation Headquarters.

Addressing the Assembly on behalf of Baroness ASHTON, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Mrs **Claude-France ARNOULD**, Deputy Director General of the Crisis Management and Planning Directorate (CMPD), Council of the EU, said that it was precisely within the competence of the CMPD to “make synergy work in a strategic way, utilising both military and civilian capabilities”.

Citing the numerous missions conducted under the aegis of the EU, she pointed out that because of their “diverse nature” and the wide range of civil and military operations, each one had been planned and conducted on an “ad hoc” basis. Despite the “complexity of the structures and missions, the operations have always been effective and successful. They have in all cases stopped the crises and stabilised the situation”, she declared.

Mrs ARNOULD gave the examples of the EU missions to Kosovo and Georgia. Both missions had led to “a real consensus on the means of action even if politically the situation was not perceived in the same manner by all the member states”. Raising the “key questions of resources and capabilities” in these times of economic crisis and budgetary constraint, Mrs ARNOULD felt that “when resources are pooled, the effectiveness of EU missions is multiplied”.

In answer to a question on relations with Russia from Mr Mike HANCOCK (United Kingdom, Liberal Group) in the ensuing debate, Mrs ARNOULD recalled that Russia was “one of the EU’s main partners” and had participated in EUFOR Chad/CAR and more recently in the “tactical coordination” of the counter-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden. “On that basis, we shall see how those relations can be improved at the political level”, she added.

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