

**15th Inter-Parliamentary Conference
for the Common Foreign and Security Policy
and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CFSP/CSDP)
Helsinki, 4-6 September 2019**

Final statement by the co-presidency

Preliminary remarks

The 15th Inter-parliamentary Conference (IPC) for the CFSP/CSDP was held in Helsinki on 4 - 6 September 2019. It was attended by parliamentarians from the EU Member States and the European Parliament. Also taking part were parliamentarians from EU candidate countries, and countries attended as guests. This final statement reflects the issues discussed among the participants.

We, the co-chairs of the 15th IPC:

- Believe that at the outset of a new European political cycle, a step change is needed in the EU's foreign and security policy. The EU needs to take on a global leadership role and actively defend and promote our common values and interests in the world. At a time when others are increasingly challenging the rules-based global order, we Europeans must defend multilateralism, international law, democracy and human rights. In order to do so, the EU must use its existing instruments more effectively, act in a more unified way, improve its decision-making processes and strengthen our common defence.
- Welcome, in this regard, the ambitious guidelines proposed by the President-elect of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen. In particular, we support the proposals to improve the decision-making in Common Foreign and Security Policy by using fully the existing Treaty provisions. In addition, we support the proposal to increase external action funding in the new multi-annual financial framework 2021-2027. We call on the President-elect to make foreign and security policy and security of the citizens in the changing world a priority during her mandate.

EU Defence

- Consider that relevant changes in the area of security and defence need to be monitored, assessed and addressed in concert with the Member States. The progressive framing of a common defence policy reinforces our European identity and our independence in order to promote peace, security and progress in Europe and in the world.

- Recall that over the past two decades three quarters of our citizens have consistently favoured a more common European defence and underline that the European Union still needs to deliver on that demand. Most Member States are committed to increase their defence spending or already spend 2% of their GDP on defence. Until 2040/45 this will amount to a cumulated defence expenditure of 10 trillion Euro in the EU. The Member States, assisted by the EU institutions, need to develop a coherent strategy for investing this amount in European security and defence and to devise the actions to be undertaken at EU level.
- Developing permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) is a key project for the defence dimension of the EU and strengthens national capabilities. Moreover, the European Defence Fund (EDF) serves to improve national capabilities and support development of the national defence industries and defence capabilities.
- EU defence cooperation should be continued to be coordinated with Nato and should aim to create synergies for both EU and Nato.

Security Challenges in the Baltic Sea Region and the Arctic

- Note that the security environment in Northern Europe has deteriorated in recent years due to security and environmental developments. Energy security is closely related to climate change and must be improved by reducing the EU's dependence on fossil fuels. The transformation of the Arctic represents one major effect of climate change on EU security.
- Emphasises that the Arctic should remain a region of non-conflictual cooperation; stresses the importance of continued engagement and dialogue with Russia and all parties within the framework of Arctic regional cooperation, particularly the Arctic Council and EU-Russia cross-border cooperation, notwithstanding the increase in the stationing of Russian military forces in the region, the building and reopening of Russian military bases and the creation of a Russian Arctic military district;
- Point to the changing nature of security threats in the Baltic Sea region, including the degradation of the maritime environment, controversial energy infrastructure projects and growing cyber threats; is deeply concerned by the significant shift from de-militarisation to re-militarization of the Baltic Sea region;

Transatlantic relations

- Recall that even though over recent years the transatlantic partnership has been facing a great number of challenges and disruptions, long-term cooperation between the EU and US, as like-minded partners, remains crucial and a core interest for both partners' collective security and prosperity.
- Consider that in a global, complex and increasingly multipolar world, the EU and the US must play a leading and constructive role by strengthening and upholding international law, promoting and protecting fundamental rights and principles and jointly addressing regional conflicts and global challenges;

Western Balkans

- Consider that a steady integration of the Western Balkans into the fabric of the EU's values, processes and structures remains the key objective of EU enlargement policy. The obligation to maintain the credibility of enlargement policy remains a joint responsibility of decision-makers across the EU and the Western Balkan countries. The EU, its Member States and the accession countries must reinforce their commitment, as the processes of accession and the EU's internal reform should go hand in hand in order to reinforce each other.
- Highlight that reducing EU integration to a mere technocratic and economic process risks undermining its foundations, namely democratisation, the rule of law and media freedom; urge to immediately address undemocratic tendencies, including state and media capture and overcoming remaining divides, thus achieving genuine ethnical, political and (inter-) national reconciliation, with the Prespa Agreement being a standard-setting example.

Hybrid Threats

- Commend the hybrid Centre of Excellence (CoE) for its valuable contribution to sharing best practices, building capability, testing new ideas and exercising defence against hybrid threats; call on the Commission and the High Representative to lead the work on countering hybrid threats and on developing hybrid responses, and to provide appropriate support to the CoE for all its missions.
- Call on the Commission and the High Representative to make hybrid risk surveys a standard tool in the EU's external action, and in particular where the EU invests abroad in peace, security and development or where Member States' security and defence forces are being deployed; underline the need for the EU to remain a source for reliable information and for fact-based assessments, and to provide appropriate assistance to those affected by disinformation and blackmail.

Iran

- Strongly reaffirm the EU's continued commitment to preserving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA) as a key element for regional and global security. We urge Iran to return to full JCPoA compliance, to remain in the agreement, and to make sure that the Iranian nuclear programme remains peaceful. We welcome the fact that the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) with Iran is now operational, as it enables the continuation of legitimate trade with Iran.
- Call for a regional solution for Iran's ballistic missiles programme to avoid further escalation; call for urgent restraint and de-escalation of tensions in the whole Middle East, in order to preserve the political stability of countries of the region.
- Welcome and support the regional initiatives on maritime security that will contribute to de-escalate and to rebuild trust and understanding among the main actors. Freedom of navigation must be respected at all times.

Climate change and security

- Recall that climate change impacts all aspects of human life, including by increasing the likelihood of conflicts and violence, poverty and displacement.
- Highlight that climate security concerns should be integrated into the entire foreign policy portfolio, including foreign trade. The EU should develop capacities to monitor climate change-related risks, and should include conflict sensitivity and crisis prevention policies. In that context, the EU missions and programmes in conflict areas should offer adequate response capabilities.
- Insist on the importance of the EU speaking with a single and unified voice in all international forums. We underline therefore the need to develop a comprehensive approach to climate change and security. We call on the Member States to take a stronger role in the effective implementation of international conventions such as the Paris Agreement.

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