

Parliamentary Update March

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In response to the growing interest of the European Parliament in security and defence matters, the 'Parliamentary Update' provides a short report on the latest discussions of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and in particular of its Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE) on these issues.

1. Implementation of EU's WMD strategy

In the SEDE meeting on March 1, Annalisa Giannella, Javier Solana's Personal Representative on Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, gave her regular, six-monthly progress report on the implementation of the EU's WMD Strategy.

Giannella pointed out that the EU continues its broad support to the international non-proliferation regime, international organizations and the national implementation of all relevant international agreements. In particular, she mentioned the EU's:

- financial assistance to nuclear security projects of the IAEA;
- support for the universalisation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and its national implementation;
- promotion of the universalisation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention;
- support of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (where the EU conducts training and activities related to capacity building for verification);
- advocating the transformation of the Hague Code of Conduct against ballistic missile proliferation into a binding international agreement and plans to organize a conference in support of universalisation and compliance with the code.

In addition, Giannella made reference to the creation of a WMD Centre, which was approved by the Council in December 2006. The aim of the Centre is to create better synergies between the Commission, the Council Secretariat and Member States in the implementation of the WMD Strategy. Each Member State will designate a contact point through which to interact with the WMD Centre. Giannella has started to convene weekly coordination meetings, which are already proving useful. The Centre is preparing a joint paper on nuclear terrorism and another on multilateral nuclear fuel assurance (the idea being to try to create incentives for countries not to develop national enrichment and reprocessing facilities).

In response to a question of Hubert Pirker, MEP (EPP), the Chairman of the European Parliament delegation for relations with the Korean Peninsula, Giannella agreed on the need for the EU to play an enhanced political role towards North Korea. In view of the large amount of aid given by the EU, there is agreement in the Council that the EU "should not only be payer, but a player". Although it will be hard to become the seventh party to the (six-party) talks, Giannella said that the EU is considering a role in a number of the evolving working groups (established as

part of the recent nuclear deal with North Korea), for instance on energy and on security in North East Asia.

2. NATO challenges

In the SEDE meeting on February 29, the Assistant Secretary-General of NATO, Martin Erdmann addressed the current top priorities for the Alliance, namely the stabilization of Afghanistan and Kosovo. He also referred to the ongoing tensions between NATO and the EU.

Erdmann expressed his wish for a new, comprehensive international approach towards Afghanistan in order to achieve sustainable reconstruction and development in the country. He explained that NATO's military deployment was intended to play an "enabling role" in rebuilding Afghanistan and contributing to a return to Afghan ownership. Although Erdmann conceded that NATO is facing difficulties in the south and in the border region with Pakistan, he made clear that failure in Afghanistan is not an option for the Alliance.

As to Kosovo, he stated that this issue remained a fundamental security challenge for NATO. While declining any political role in the status negotiations, he said that KFOR was determined to continue to provide security in Kosovo once agreement on its final status has been reached. NATO stood ready to work in cooperation with a civilian ESDP mission in a 'post-Berlin Plus' framework.

Erdmann referred to the problematic relationship between the EU and NATO. Due to their different membership structures and the desire of some Member States to keep the relationship at a distance, NATO and the EU tend to work in parallel rather than jointly. Although the Berlin Plus arrangements provide a good framework to avoid duplication, they may not provide an appropriate framework for strategic cooperation when addressing today's security challenges. Berlin Plus tends to reflect the pre-9/11 era, one in which global and asymmetrical threats had yet to be fully reckoned with.

In reply to questions on a possible future NATO involvement in Georgia, Erdmann made clear that the Alliance did not have any ambition to engage in that area. He added that Georgia's accession to NATO would not be possible before its internal conflicts have been resolved. Finally, Erdmann agreed that there may be a need to rethink NATO's role in the world, and did not preclude a transformation from a euro-Atlantic alliance into a global security agency.

3. Activities of COARM under German Presidency

Cyrill Jean Nunn, the current chairman of the Council Working Party on Conventional Arms Exports (COARM), outlined its main activities under the German Presidency so far in 2007. He listed the improvements contained in the 9th Annual Report on the implementation of the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports and referred to the activities aimed at promoting the principles of the Code. Stressing the Code's importance as a tool of European foreign policy, Nunn said that the EU would continue to promote and gather support for an international Arms Trade Treaty, adding that in the UN General Assembly the EU Member States would call for the establishment of a working group on the subject.

In the following discussion Ana Gomes, MEP (PSE) and Helmut Kuhne, MEP (PSE) referred to allegations of the illicit transfer of weapons and ammunition from Bosnia Herzegovina to conflict zones around the world at the time of the EU's Operation *Althea* in 2004-2005. Specifically, they asked why EUFOR was exempt from the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Export. Gomes, Kuhne and Raul Romeva, MEP (Greens) also asked why there was a stalemate in transforming the EU Code of Conduct into a legally binding act. Nunn replied that the Member States had informally addressed the issue in December 2006 in the Council, but owing to internal difficulties in France, no progress had been achieved yet. He also stressed that Germany had always advocated the legally binding nature of the code and would continue its efforts to reach a common EU position.

4. Tenth anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention

In the SEDE meeting on March 20, Rogelio Pfirter, Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) briefed the Subcommittee on the OPCW's progress towards implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, the CWC can be regarded as a success story as it has proved to be a very efficient instrument to control the development, production, stockpiling and transfer of chemical weapons.

Pfirter explained that although 182 states have joined the OPCW, the CWC's effectiveness is significantly undermined by those countries still outside. The most notable non-parties are North Korea and certain states in the Middle East (Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon and Syria), where the entanglement of chemical weapons with the nuclear issue means that no imminent progress is to be expected.

Pfirter mentioned that six states have declared to be in possession of stockpiles of chemical weapons, with the US and Russia having the largest ones. Under the supervision of the OPCW inspectors, Russia has now destroyed 10 per cent of its stockpiles and has to irreversibly destroy the remainder by 2012. Given the enormous costs of the destruction, the EU contributes to chemical weapon destruction in Russia (under the G8 Global Partnership).

In this regard on March 19 the Council adopted a Joint Action (2007/178/CFSP) for the destruction of chemical weapons in Russia as part of the EU's WMD Strategy. The EU will earmark €3.15m from its 2007 budget for the destruction of nearly two million artillery munitions and rockets containing some 5, 500 tonnes of neuro-toxic agents stocked at the chemical weapon destruction site in Chtchoutchie in Russia. The EU is also involved in implementing seven other projects aimed at promoting the CWC, with an overall budget of €1.7m.

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