

Eurodéfense Observatory 34



EU – NATO Relationship

The Observatory is chaired by Eurodéfense – United Kingdom and monitors the joint declarations and other activities in this relationship aiming to identify concrete and effective developments.

Update – May 2024

Since our last report the Observatory has held an online meeting on 27th February attended by most of the members. During that online session Hanna Ojanen (ED-Finland) provided an update on Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO and an analysis of the current threats in the Baltic region, Jean Fournet (ED-France) gave an assessment of the response by NATO's European members and the EU to the prospect of Donald Trump winning this year's US Presidential election, and José Alberto Pereira (ED Portugal) gave a short presentation on European armed forces sustainability.

As we have previously reported, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has provided an unprecedented opportunity for western allies to work together on common responses. NATO and the European Union continue to work together providing much needed military and financial assistance to the government of Ukraine.

Background to Developments since last report

NATO Secretary General addresses protection of critical undersea infrastructure, support to Ukraine with EU Defence Ministers (14 November 2023)

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg participated in a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union with EU Defence Ministers in Brussels on 14 November to discuss the protection of critical undersea infrastructure and the importance of continued support to Ukraine.

The Secretary General stressed that the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines last year and the recent damage to the Baltic connector pipeline and cables show that infrastructure is vulnerable, and that threats are real and developing.

Since these incidents, NATO has stepped up air and naval patrols and increased presence in the Baltic and North Seas. At the Vilnius Summit in July, Allies agreed to establish a new centre on critical undersea infrastructure at NATO's Maritime Command in the United Kingdom. NATO and the European Union have also established a task force on the resilience of critical infrastructure. *"Critical infrastructure is important, and it's an area where we once*

again see the relevance and importance of cooperation between the NATO and the European Union,” said the Secretary General.

On the situation in Ukraine, Mr Stoltenberg highlighted that intense fighting continues. “The situation on the battlefield is difficult. And that just makes it even more important that we sustain and step up our support for Ukraine because we cannot allow President Putin to win,” said the Secretary General. “Ukraine must prevail as a sovereign independent nation in Europe and it’s in our interest to support Ukraine,” he said.

NATO Secretary General meets EU College of Commissioners (15 November 2023)

Attending a meeting with the EU College of Commissioners in Brussels on 15 November 2023, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg thanked European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen for being a driving force behind the NATO-EU partnership. He said that both organisations have a lot in common, sharing the same values and facing the same challenges. Mr. Stoltenberg highlighted that NATO and the EU have done more together this year, including working towards lasting stability in the Western Balkans, tackling disinformation and advancing their strategic partnership in areas like military mobility, cyber and space. The Secretary General said that both organisations sent a strong message to President Putin that we will stand by Ukraine for as long as it takes.

NATO and the EU signed in January a new joint declaration to address a broader range of issues, including growing geostrategic competition, resilience and the protection of critical infrastructure. They also set up a NATO-EU Taskforce on Resilience of Critical Infrastructure to reduce vulnerabilities and dependencies on authoritarian regimes like Russia and China; and to boost the resilience of supply chains and technology. The Secretary General said that the war in Ukraine demonstrates the need to ramp up industrial production of key ammunition and welcomed the EU’s efforts to increase production capacity and joint procurement.

Mr. Stoltenberg said that as instability grows with brutal wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, the ongoing threat of terrorism, a climate crisis and authoritarian regimes threatening the international order, we need strong institutions like NATO and the European Union. He stressed that together, Europe and North America can defend our democratic values, keep our people safe and our nations strong.

The European Union Military Staff hosts the NATO International Military Staff for the 20th EUMS-IMS Director Generals Conference (1 December 2023)

The Director General of the European Union Military Staff (EUMS), Lieutenant General Michiel van der Laan welcomed the Director General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)’s International Military Staff (IMS), Lieutenant General Janusz Adamczak and his staff to the EUMS Headquarters for 20th EUMS/IMS Director Generals Conference, which took place on 1 December 2023.

The EUMS - NATO IMS Director Generals (DGs) Conference enables both DGs and their respective staffs to report on the progress of the joint work plan agreed by the EUMS and the NATO IMS, as well as to exchange views and discuss ongoing collaboration and cooperation between both organisations.

The 20th EUMS-IMS DGs Conference was Lt Gen Van der Laan's first as Director General of the EUMS. In his opening remarks, he welcomed the NATO Director General of the IMS and his staff back to the EUMS HQ. He also took the opportunity to acknowledge that the EU-NATO partnership was more important than ever with regard to the current global security climate. *"This conference is one of the best examples of the fruitful cooperation between NATO and the EU. Its steady pace is instrumental in developing the excellent cooperation even further."*

Taking the floor, Lieutenant General Janusz Adamczak, thanked the EUMS for hosting the conference and for the ongoing staff-to-staff cooperation between both organisations. Lieutenant General Adamczak emphasised the importance of the meeting as *"an essential activity, not only because it guides the cooperation between our two staffs, but more importantly, because it is a key part of the larger effort to increase the over-all level of NATO-EU cooperation in line with the political expectation, reflected in our higher political documents such as the NATO Strategic Concept, the EU Strategic Compass and, most recently, the Vilnius communique"*.

EUMS Deputy Director General, Major General Gábor Horvath introduced the agenda for the conference. Agenda items included follow-on tasks from the previous EUMS-IMS DGs Conference, which took place in June 2023. Major General Horvath outlined the continuing EU-NATO cooperation and information exchange in a number of key areas, which are central to further collaboration. Areas of discussion included Military Mobility, Medical Cooperation, CIS/Cyber interoperability and Gender perspectives. The joint EUMS and IMS staffs also discussed topics such as EU-NATO information exchange and the follow-on tasks for the next conference. The meeting concluded with both DG EUMS and DG NATO IMS providing their guidance and closing remarks on the way ahead for 2024.

The next EUMS-IMS DGs Conference will be hosted by NATO and is scheduled to take place in May 2024.

NATO Allies discuss the importance of boosting defence industrial capacity with European Commissioner Thierry Breton (13 February 2024)

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg welcomed the European Commissioner for the Internal Market, Thierry Breton, to the NATO Headquarters on 13 February. Mr Stoltenberg emphasised the importance of NATO-EU cooperation to address shared priorities, including boosting defence production and ensuring long-term support to Ukraine.

Commissioner Breton also briefed a meeting of the North Atlantic Council, chaired by Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoană. Mr Geoană underlined that NATO is implementing the Defence Production Action Plan, which leaders agreed in Vilnius, to accelerate joint procurement, boost production capacity and enhance interoperability. *"Two years after the start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, it is absolutely imperative, both for Ukraine and for Euro-Atlantic security that we increase our defence production and revitalise our defence industries,"* Mr Geoană said. He also added that since

last July, the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA) has agreed contracts for around 10 billion dollars, including for Patriot missiles and 155-millimetre ammunition. *“Allies have a single set of forces. So we need to ensure a complementary approach on defence industrial issues, that respects NATO’s competencies, for example in standard setting, and does not create barriers between Allies”.*

In January 2023, NATO and the EU signed a third joint declaration to further strengthen the partnership and address a broader range of issues, including growing geostrategic competition, resilience and the protection of critical infrastructure.

NATO Deputy Secretary General at the European Parliament: *“NATO-EU partnership is crucial to European security”*. (14 February 2024)

Speaking at the European Parliament on 14 February 2024, NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoană underlined the importance of NATO-EU cooperation to address the security situation in the Black Sea, Western Balkans and eastern Europe, and tackle other shared challenges like disinformation, cyber security and military issues.

During an exchange of views with Members of the European Parliament from the Subcommittee on Security and Defence the Deputy Secretary General affirmed that a close NATO-EU partnership is fundamental to European security, particularly in the context of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Mr Geoană highlighted the importance of fostering complementarity, coherence and interoperability on efforts to enhance the European defence industrial base and defence capabilities.

The Deputy Secretary General stressed the need to continue supporting Ukraine, noting the billions of euros of financial and humanitarian assistance that NATO and EU countries have provided. He also welcomed the recent EU agreement on providing 50 billion euros of long-term funding, as well as the decision taken last December to open accession negotiations to support Ukraine’s path to Euro-Atlantic integration.

Mr Geoană said that the outcome of the war in Ukraine will shape the future of European security for decades to come. Since Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, NATO has implemented the largest reinforcement of its collective defence in a generation, including by strengthening its deterrence and defence, increasing defence spending, and supporting the defence industry. NATO has enhanced its partnerships, alongside the EU, with Georgia and Moldova, which face unrelenting pressure from Russia. NATO also works closely with the EU on the ground in the Western Balkans through the NATO-led KFOR mission in Kosovo and by supporting the EU-led operation EUFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina under the Berlin Plus arrangements to maintain a safe and secure environment for all.

Secretary General Stoltenberg: *“NATO-EU cooperation has reached unprecedented levels”* (16 February)

Arriving at an event during the Munich Security Conference hosted by Bavaria's Christian Social Union. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg underscored the importance of NATO-EU cooperation in response to Russia’s war against Ukraine.

Speaking alongside the President of the European Commission and the Minister-President of Bavaria, Mr Stoltenberg said that two years into Russia’s war Ukraine continues to fight for

its freedom and independence. “This is due first and foremost to the courage of the Ukrainian people, enabled by major military and economic support from Europe and North America. I welcome that the European Council has approved an important new package of aid to Ukraine, and I expect the US to follow suit. This is vital”, he said.

Sweden finally joins NATO and attends first North Atlantic Council meeting as an ally, in discussion devoted to NATO-EU (12th March).

Sweden officially joined the Alliance on 7 March and becomes the 23rd member state in both the EU and NATO. Its accession was marked with a flag-raising ceremony at NATO Headquarters on 11 March. Speaking at the flag-raising, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg underlined that "Sweden's membership makes NATO stronger, Sweden safer, and all of us more secure". He added: "Sweden's accession shows again that NATO's door remains open. No one can close it."

Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoană chaired the meeting of the Council, which was focused on NATO-EU cooperation, and featured the participation of European External Action Service Secretary General Stefano Sannino, as well as Deputy Secretary General for Peace, Security and Defence Charles Fries. Allies had the opportunity to exchange views on the European Union's Strategic Compass, as well as support for Ukraine, the Western Balkans, and the situation in the Middle East and North Africa. Allies underscored that the European Union remains a unique and essential partner for NATO and welcomed work to further strengthen the partnership in a spirit of transparency and complementarity.

Observatory Participants

We were delighted for Prof Ana Isabel Xavier, Eurodefense-Portugal representative on Observatory 34 on her appointment as Secretary of State for National Defence in the newly formed Portuguese Government. We offer her our warmest congratulations and good wishes and thank her for her participation in the Observatory. Professor Nuno Gama de Oliveira Pinto is the new Eurodefense-Portugal representative in the Observatory.

Current Participants

Robert Walter (United Kingdom), Chairman
Jean Fournet (France)
Robin Ashby (United Kingdom)
Zenit Schutte (Netherlands)
Kees van Rij (Netherlands)
Hanna Ojanen (Finland)
Federico Yaniz (Spain)
John Howe (United Kingdom)
Alan Sharman (United Kingdom)
José Alberto Pereira (Portugal)
Nuno Gama de Oliveira Pinto (Portugal)

Robert Walter (United Kingdom), Chairman (1st May 2024)