EU-NATO cooperation in the context of transatlantic relations

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The Foreign Affairs Committee adopted an own-initiative report by Antonio LÓPEZ-ISTÚRIZ WHITE (EPP, ES) on EU-NATO cooperation in transatlantic relations.

70 years of transatlantic ties through NATO

While recalling the EU's ambition to be a global actor for peace and security, Members are convinced that the **EU and NATO have converging security and defence interests** and stressed that NATO remains the bedrock of the security and collective defence of its members and of the transatlantic community as a whole and represents an indispensable forum for consultation and decision-making on security matters between the allied countries.

Members reiterated their **support for transatlantic cooperation, partnership and friendship**, which have contributed to Europe's success over the past 70 years and have been the foundation of its stability and security since the end of the Second World War.

The transatlantic community faces a wide range of emerging threats, systemic competition and unprecedented common challenges to democratic societies, the rule of law and respect for fundamental freedoms. Given the resulting challenge to the rules-based international order, Members considered that strengthening EU-NATO cooperation contributes to effective global governance and multilateralism.

Strengthening transatlantic and EU-NATO cooperation

Members endorsed the proposals made in December 2020 by the Commission President and the VP/HR for an **EU-US security and defence dialogue** and welcomed the Biden administration's clearly expressed commitment to engage with EU and NATO partners in all areas. They stressed both the vital importance of the presence of US forces in Europe for Europe's security and its unwavering commitment to transatlantic security cooperation.

Members considered that the NATO summit scheduled for 14 June 2021 offers an important opportunity to review the current state of EU-NATO cooperation, to take it forward and to reaffirm the transatlantic link. In this respect, they stressed that EU-NATO cooperation is mutually reinforcing and based on the guiding principles of **transparency, reciprocity, inclusiveness and decision-making autonomy of both organisations**.

In particular, the report stressed the importance of transatlantic cooperation on a range of international issues such as climate change, the response to pandemics, emerging disruptive technologies, artificial intelligence, cyber security, counter-terrorism, including jihadist and state-sponsored terrorism, energy, maritime security and resilience, as well as outer space.

Members believe that the future of EU-NATO cooperation should build on the experiences and lessons learned from the EU's unique expertise in civilian crisis management and capacity building. They stressed that both the EU and NATO should strengthen their cooperation and coordinate it more effectively in the key area of resilience.

Threats and challenges faced by the EU and NATO

Members expressed concern about **Russia's** continued revisionist, militaristic and aggressive policies. They called on NATO and the EU to adopt a proactive and coherent strategy and to respond in a lawful, swift and united manner to Russia's traditional and hybrid acts of aggression and provocation.

China's growing influence and assertiveness, as well as its military, technological and political rise, should also be the subject of a coordinated transatlantic strategy. Members expressed their deep concern about the policies pursued by the Chinese Communist Party authorities regarding, among other things, the repression of democracy in Hong Kong, the discriminatory treatment of religious and cultural minorities, in particular the Uighurs in Xinjiang, the threats to Taiwan or the aggressive policies and actions in the South China Sea.

The report stressed the need for a coherent, clear and coordinated approach by the EU and NATO towards the Southern Neighbourhood. It also called for a comprehensive, inclusive and strategic security and defence partnership between the EU and the **UK**.

In addition, the EU and NATO should continue to strengthen their own capabilities to prevent and **deter hybrid and cyber attacks**. Members proposed the creation of a joint EU-NATO working group on cyber security.

The report called on the EU and NATO to increase their joint efforts to achieve and maintain **global technological leadership in military capabilities**, including through collaborative funding of research projects based on advanced technologies, quantum computing and artificial intelligence. A deepening of the EU-NATO dialogue is also needed to address climate change and its multiple consequences for international security.

Achieving the EU's defence ambitions

Members are convinced that Member States must increase their efforts to meet the EU’s level of ambition and **improve its ability to act** with a more capable, deployable, interoperable and sustainable set of military and civilian capabilities and forces. This would give the EU the capacity to contribute more decisively to transatlantic security, while enabling it to move towards strategic autonomy, and would pave the way for the progressive establishment of a European Defence Union (EDU), if the European Council unanimously so decides.

The report stressed that strategic autonomy enhances transatlantic security and is not intended to duplicate measures and resources or to decouple or weaken NATO, but rather to be complementary to and, interoperable with, NATO efforts and capabilities.

Members considered that the transatlantic partnership can only be successful if all Member States fulfil their commitments, including their defence investment pledges, and support each other. In this respect, they underlined NATO's **2%** goal and recalled the commitment to devote **20%** of the annual defence budget to the crucial issue of research and development.

Towards an ambitious partnership

Members expressed their firm belief that EU-NATO relations need to be upgraded in order to reach the **partnership’s full potential**. They called for regular special summits with the participation of all NATO and EU heads of state and government in order to maintain trust and understanding at the highest levels. They also encouraged a discussion on the creation of a permanent Council of EU Defence Ministers, which should closely liaise with meetings of NATO defence ministers.