Implementation of the common security and defence policy – annual report 2023

2023/2119(INI) - 28/02/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 350 votes to 91, with 96 abstentions, a resolution on the implementation of the common security and defence policy – annual report 2023.

The European continent is facing the most complex combination of both military and non-military threats caused by Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine that has severely endangered the security and stability of the EU. In this regard, Parliament expressed its concern about the rapidly deteriorating global security situation and stated that in these times of high uncertainty European and transatlantic unity, as well as close collaboration with like-minded partners across the globe, is more necessary than ever in order to address the challenges created by multiple global crises, act proactively and react decisively to threats to the international rules-based order and facilitate the effective implementation of the CSDP.

Providing Ukraine with the defence capabilities it needs

Parliament confirmed that the EU will continue to support Ukraine by providing the necessary military means to end Russia's war of aggression and restore Ukraine's territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. It stressed that Ukraine's military victory and its EU and NATO memberships are needed for overall security, stability and sustainable peace on the European continent.

Members called for a further increase in and speeding up of financial and military assistance to Ukraine and for the immediate deployment of modern equipment, weapons and next-generation air defence and surface-to-surface systems. Moreover, the larger Member States with significant defence industry capacities, such as France, Spain and Italy, are urged to significantly and urgently increase military assistance to Ukraine.

The joint procurement of ammunition for Ukraine should also be sped up according to the report and the need to ramp up the manufacturing capacities of the European industry by ensuring rapid and effective implementation of the Act in Support of Ammunition Production (ASAP) is stressed.

The EEAS and the Commission are called on to come forward with a plan for a sustainable and long-term package of security commitments for Ukraine that is complementary to ensuring the increasing security requirements of the EU.

Strengthening European defence in response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine

The resolution underlined its unwavering support for the commitment of the EU's heads of state and government to provide all the necessary support needed by Ukraine and to take greater responsibility for European security by bolstering Member States' and EU defence capabilities. It encouraged greater coordination with transatlantic allies and NATO in this respect. Members considered it necessary to **update the Strategic Compass** in order to incorporate the lessons learned from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine that began days before its adoption, as well as in the light of recent events in the Middle East.

Furthermore, Members reaffirmed that, to become a credible geopolitical player, the EU should **reform its decision-making system**. They regretted that the potential for fast, efficient and effective foreign, security and defence action, as provided for by the passerelle clauses of the TEU, has been used only in a very

limited manner. The Council is called on to gradually switch to **qualified majority voting for decisions on the CFSP and CSDP**, at least in those areas that do not have military implications.

The report calls for the appointment of a **Defence Union Commissioner** (DUC), within the next Commission who is responsible for the finalisation of a true European Defence Union and all defence-related matters, including CSDP, following a clear division of tasks with the VP/HR. Members believe that, together with the to-be-established fully-fledged Security and Defence Committee in the Parliament, the DUC should jointly oversee a dedicated and substantial Defence Union budget.

Funding

The resolution called on the Member States to increase and ensure sustainable levels of defence spending to adjust to the current geopolitical situation and address the significant threats towards the Union's security. The EU NATO Member States are called on to increase their military budgets, based on an assessment of their own requirements, and to spend at least **2 % of GDP**, in a well-coordinated and comprehensive manner.

Global cooperation

Parliament expressed concern over **China's aggressive military posturing** in the South China Sea, including island-building, harassment and dangerous manoeuvres conducted by its navy, coast guard and maritime militia, as well as its continued military pressure, assault exercises, airspace violations and other grey-zone military actions, including cyber and disinformation campaigns against Taiwan.

In addition, the EU's cooperation with certain African countries is being contested. Therefore, the EU and its Member States need to evaluate the effectiveness of EU CSDP missions and operations.

The resolution welcomed the accession of **Finland** to NATO but strongly deplored the delaying of the ratification of Sweden's NATO accession. Members urged Hungary and Türkiye to ratify Sweden's NATO membership without any further delay.

Members also underlined the importance of developing security and defence dialogues with partners around the world, in particular in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership, but also with key partners in strategic maritime areas such as those stretching from the Southern Neighbourhood and the Indo-Pacific, from the east coast of Africa to the South Pacific and the Far East.

Moreover, Parliament recognised that the **Arctic region** carries significant strategic and geopolitical importance and underlined the importance of preserving security, stability and cooperation in the area.

Members strongly condemned the numerous missile tests conducted by **North Korea** in 2023 and underlined the particular responsibility of China and Russia when it comes to North Korea. They called on the two countries to use their influence to prevent any further escalation.

Moreover, Members also condemned, in the strongest possible terms, the despicable terrorist attacks committed by the terrorist group Hamas against **Israel**, including the taking of hostages, and express support for the State of Israel and its people. While emphasising Israel's right to defend itself in line with international law and international humanitarian law, the report called for continued, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access and aid to reach those in need through all necessary measures including humanitarian corridors and pauses for humanitarian needs.

The role of the European Parliament

Members called for the reinforcement of parliamentary democracy and improved scrutiny of non-EU partner countries through parliamentary dialogues on security and defence issues and by building parliamentary resilience against hybrid threats, including cyber and foreign information manipulation and interference.

Members reiterated their demand for delegated acts for work programmes of EU-budget funded defence industrial programmes and their call for the establishment of a fully-fledged European Parliament Committee on Security and Defence with **full legislative and budgetary responsibilities on European defence matters**.