Developing a common European security and defence policy CFSP after Cologne and Helsinki

2000/2005(INI) - 20/11/2000

In a declaration from the General Affairs Council on 20 November 2000, the Union highlighted its determination to develop an autonomous capability to decide on and, where NATO as a whole is not engaged, to launch and conduct EU-led military operations in response to international crises. For that purpose, Member States have decided to develop more effective military capabilities. This process, without unnecessary duplication, does not involve the establishment of a European army but rather it is an integral part of strengthening the CFSP. The Union will thus be able to make a greater contribution to international security in keeping with the principles of the United Nations Charter, the OSCE Charter and the Helsinki Final Act. In this framework, the Union recognises the primary responsibility of the United Nations Security Council with regard to international peace-keeping and security. With regard to the military capabilities, which will complement the other instruments available to the Union, at the Helsinki European Council the Member States set themselves the headline goal of being able, by 2003, to deploy within 60 days and sustain for at least one year forces up to corps level (60,000 persons). Concerning the forces, the Council believes that in quantitative terms, the voluntary contributions announced by Member States make it possible to achieve in full the headline goal established in Helsinki As regards command, control and communications, the Member States offered a satisfactory number of national or multinational headquarters at strategic, operational, force and component levels. These offers will have to be evaluated further in qualitative terms so that the EU can, in addition to possible recourse to NATO capabilities, have the best possible command and control resources at its disposal. The Union pointed out the importance it attaches to the speedy conclusion of ongoing talks on access to NATO capabilities and assets. The European Union Military Staff, which will acquire an initial operating capability in the course of 2001, will bolster the European Union's collective early warning capability and will provide it with a predecisional situation assessment and strategic planning capability. The Member States also committed themselves to medium and long-term efforts in order to improve both their operational and their strategic capabilities still further and also to continue taking steps to strengthen their own capabilities and carrying out existing or planned projects implementing multinational solutions, including in the field of pooling resources. These projects as a whole relate to: 1) improving the performance of European forces in respect of the availability, deployability, sustainability and interoperability of those forces; 2) developing "strategic" capabilities: strategic mobility to deliver the forces rapidly to the field of operations; headquarters to command and control the forces and the associated information and communication system; means of providing them with information; 3) strengthening essential operational capabilities in the framework of a crisis-management operation; areas which were identified in this context were: resources for search and rescue in operational conditions, means of defence against ground-to-ground missiles, precision weapons, logistic support, simulation tools. The restructuring of the European defence industries taking place in certain Member States was a positive factor in this. It encouraged the development of European capabilities. Member States also agreed on the importance of defining down an evaluation mechanism enabling follow-up to be made and progress to be facilitated toward the realisation of the commitments made with a view to achieving the headline goal, in both quantitative and qualitative terms.