

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The High Level Symposium on Military Mobility from January 30th provided a clear strategic political message to move forward in a collective and coordinated way, so enhancing military mobility and making it more resilient. The increased polarisation and practical implementation of military mobility that we have witnessed since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine has served as a litmus test and has given further impetus to improve military mobility and to maintain the political momentum.

Notwithstanding the 2018 Action Plan on Military Mobility focus on national actions – always with respect to national sovereignty - still - a lot of work is on the shelf when looking at national military mobility plans, reducing transiting times, creating the network of national POC, and not in the least the testing in real life exercises of the paper dragon. Though the (20)22 Action Plan on Military Mobility already responded to additional needs, still supplementary actions are required to create a high quality and resilient transport network, supported by appropriate logistical infrastructure.

This seminar offers an ideal step stone to translate further the earlier mentioned political message and goals already embedded in the EU Strategic Compass into structural and operational solutions, as part of a Whole of Society Approach.

You, as a various audience are integral part of this chain where every single link is accountable in the establishment of that solid, coherent and harmonized military mobility universe. Your insight and expertise is much required to fill in the gaps, to create a network - and not a patchwork - and to prepare for the future.

Taking into consideration the ongoing activities on military mobility and EDA PESCO project from the past, the basis of today’s discussions goes back to the (20)22 EU Strategic Compass consisting of four main baskets: ACT, SECURE, PARTNER & INVEST.

It aims to guide the necessary development of the EU security and defence agenda in “the world and threats we face” (*cf.* *Intro EU SC*), and on how to get this done for the next 10 years.

Military mobility is part of the ACT-basket, but needless to explain its intertwined relationship with SECURE: when it comes to force protection, cyber and resilience, with PARTNER: especially with NATO and our direct neighbourhood, and INVEST: looking to the successful relationship our brother in arms from the European Commission - DG MOVE. The latter should be used as an example case to mobilize other instruments and resources present in the EU institutions and the Commission in particular.

Military Mobility is one of the flagship projects with NATO, in which we share the requirement for short notice and large-scale movements, the technical requirements for transport infrastructure, the challenge for an improved information exchange, and - to a certain extent - a shared situational awareness. Further steps at the highest level are required to overcome the recurrent structural chokepoints hampering good progress in reaching or common destination.

In the same vein, the so called ‘global commons’ have become part of the discussions with specific attention to the space, cyber and maritime domain. EUNAVFOR Operation ASPIDES and the additional attention for critical maritime infrastructure put in evidence Europe’s intentions to protect its interests, and to become a more reliable security provider.

As part of the European External Action Service, the military are required to execute missions and operations beyond the territories of the EU member states. The Action Plan on Military Mobility 2.0 recognizes the need for fast deployment from different Member States locations in order to support this effort. Additionally, the

operationalization of the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity by (20)25 also benefits from the military mobility efforts in order to be able to move up to 5000 troops on short notice in a 360° approach. Still more action is required to have the right capabilities in sufficient numbers available on the parking lot. Strategic enablers such as airlift, sealift and rail and affiliated infrastructures must maximize the benefit from the offered dual-use incentive. This cannot happen without a better insight in the military requirements by non-military entities - whether Governmental or commercial – and a military transparency to a certain extent. The Whole of Society approach is key to the success of the further operationalisation of military mobility and the resilience of the overall logistic chain in the EU.

Needless to say that military mobility significantly contributes to both EU’s operational effectiveness and NATO’s deterrence and defence capabilities for which actions should be complementary and mutually reinforcing. The US Defender and NATO Steadfast Defender exercises, the recent NATO deployments to the East and the continuous movement requirements to and from logistics hubs in support of Ukraine have proven that we have to do more, better and faster. At the same time, the redundancy of the transport and logistics networks and the applicable procedures need to be thoroughly tested in joint EU-NATO table-top and life exercises.

Now what exactly does it mean to *“build a structured and resilient network comprising multi-modal corridors connected by logistic hubs, capable of handling heavy and large scale military transport at short notice”*? Many people talk about it ... only few actually realise what it really entails!

Let us assume the combined move of about 75 Brigades of Land Forces of NATO Allies, EU MS and Partners through Europe. Without taking into account pre-positioned troops, this would mean that more than 150.000 wheeled & tracked vehicles and other

equipment, material and containers need to be moved. In terms of lane meters - so head-to-tail - this translates in a total distance from Antwerp to Warsaw (so approximately 1300 Km) full of military equipment. Of course, in reality the deployment of troops will be phased, but visualize sea lifting all this equipment would require the equivalent of about 500 RoRo ships. Imagine the consequences of these periodic moves on the road ... or even by rail that would require around 2000 lengthy trains of some 600 meters long. And just air lifting the soldiers from across the Atlantic and from various Member States into and through Europe would require the equivalent of more than 3000 planes (type A319/A320 or Boeing 737).

This merely gives you an idea of the movement aspect of this endeavour for Europe as a Receiving or Transit Nation. Picture the required infrastructure just for refuelling & lodging. Imagine the impact on surface infrastructure in Europe that is already dense, and the impact on the economy! This absolutely does not even take into account the required Ground Space for different Staging Areas and Convoy Support Centres along the different corridors, including the required Force Protection of these convoys and at Staging Areas, and with additional attention to the protection of critical infrastructure, cyber and hybrid threats, and Air Defence aspects when required.

Do I need to go on?

At the same time please do not forget that Europe does not only act as Receiving or Transit Nation for deployments into and through Europe, but it will also have to take up the burden as Rear Area, so as Host Nation.

Reflecting on the current strands of Action Plan on Military Mobility 2.0 all the above proves the increased sense of urgency and the need for accountability. Only a continued collective “Team Europe”-effort, in close collaboration with our Partners,

can make the desired and so desperately required Whole of Society approach work. The current political and geostrategic constellations urge us, on the one hand, to tackle the open topics from the Action Plan, and on the other hand, to secure the mid and long term political engagement for military mobility via a renewed “Military Mobility Pledge”.

1. The excellent cooperation with the European commission - DG MOVE - on improvement of dual-use transport infrastructure resulted in a successful spending of 1.74 Billion Euro and a higher engagement of Member States as the projects gained publicity. The developments of the NATO Enablement Plan, the EUMS logistics concepts, and the EU Rapid Deployment Capacities offer additional operational arguments to update the technical requirements, and for DG MOVE to request for additional funding - in reference to the initial 22-27 planned budget of 6,5 Billion Euro - for the upcoming 28-35 Multi-Financial Framework (MFF). Member States can improve their accountability by establishing national military mobility plans in a Whole of Government approach, by increasing national budgets, promoting public-private investments or through coalitions or Letter of Intends - such as signed during last month high level symposium on Military Mobility between the Netherlands, Germany and Poland.
2. Notwithstanding good progress was made in reducing the bureaucracy in border crossings, customs and dangerous goods issues, in practice scarce resources and valuable time still are lost when it comes to the “proof in the pudding”. In this vein, immersing civil authorities in military plans can be considered another dimension of dual-use. Providing tailored training to key personnel and recurrent exercising with all military, civilian and governmental stakeholders, is another way to get everyone on the same sheet of paper.

Cyber proof digitalisation will also help to avoid duplication of effort in the collection and maintaining of basic movement data, speeding-up the throughput times, improving processing of transport and customs documents and increasing the process effectiveness. EU Commission Directorates DG CONNECT and DG TAXUD should also be mobilized in that effort. A common digitized system, combined with tracking and tracing, will also assist in building the much-required “common recognised logistics pictures” to assess gaps and priorities, including with NATO. Ideally, it should also link military planning and execution with real time data from non-military entities - as part of the Whole of Society Approach.

3. Knocking down an open door, no Member State is able to organise a large-scale military transport at short notice on its own. Good planning and pre-negotiated contracts are a solid start, but intensified cooperation and additional strategic lift capabilities are required to make it happen. On short notice, special attention to airlift of outsized cargo, availability of RoRo ships and not in the least the mass movement by rail transport is required. Apart from existing movement organisations and centres a permanent “Centre of Excellence on Military Mobility” or temporary “Military Mobility Capability Coalition” could facilitate the Whole of Society approach.
4. The collective Team Europe-effort is considered complementary to NATO. In order to move forward and come with tangible results common logistic actions have been identified for (20)24 between NATO and EUMS counterparts. The basis of a deepened and more tangible cooperation with NATO starts with an increased information exchange, common IT-tools and common training and exercising. The joint (live) EU-NATO exercising of military movements are a logic and necessary step to respond to the EU Strategic Compass and the NATO

Enablement Plan for SACEUR’s Area of Responsibility to increase our deterrence, to improve our redundancy and to further align the current EU five working days with the NATO 72 hours requirement!

The discussions from this seminar can only contribute to challenge and speed up the current military mobility actions providing novel solutions, new insights, blueprints, and ambitious goals for the future. Without any discussion, Member States remain in the driving seat, but at the same time, their buy-in in a Whole of Society approach is a prerequisite to translate political decisions into tangible viable results and resources. The EU has a broad panoply of instruments that can be explored for this purpose. Also, EU-NATO efforts should be mutually reinforcing as well as the EDA PESCO projects on Military Mobility and Logistics Hubs. Furthermore, the common development and acquisition of transport capacities is the final cornerstone in this endeavour.

The imminent EEAS-Progress Report on the Action Plan on Military Mobility 2.0, the Non-Paper from this seminar, alongside the upcoming related Belgian Presidency activities will lay the groundwork for a renewed Military Mobility Pledge. This pledge should be endorsed through a political commitment at ministerial level – preferably in the May 24 Council Conclusions - to ensure coherence and create the necessary visibility and impetus in relevant national processes as just mentioned. The results mentioned above will be further incentivised by EUMS during its (20)24 Logistics Conference planned on 18-19 Jun. After Summer (20)24 EUMS will organize a high-level meeting on military mobility at EU-NATO Directors level to prepare the mid and long term strategic guidelines. These elements will be included in the Multi-Financial Framework 28-35 and in a possible follow-on Action Plan on Military Mobility 3.0.

I would say fasten your seat belts and I wish you a successful road trip in military mobility for the next two days.