

Annual report on the implementation of the common foreign and security policy

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted an own-initiative report by David McALLISTER (EPP, DE) on the annual report on the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

Convinced that no single Member State is capable of responding to current issues on its own, Members stressed that common EU action is the most effective way of safeguarding Europe's interests, defending its values, engage in a wider world as an influential global actor, as well as to protect its citizens and Member States from growing threats to their security, including in a global digital sphere.

Members recalled the EUs commitment to develop a Common Foreign and Security Policy guided by the values of democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and compliance with the UN Charter and international law. The EUs external policies should be consistent with each other and with other policies with an external dimension.

Members stated that the core milestones for the European Union to deliver on the expectations of its citizens are:

1) Coordination of an assessment of profound threats and challenges within the EU and a common approach in how to address them; taking into account in particular the prevention of radicalisation, which can lead to recruitment by terrorist groups.

In this perspective, Members highlighted the following points:

- guaranteeing the security of EU citizens and the integrity of the EUs territory, stabilising the neighbourhood, especially in the Western Balkans with a focus on more visibility of the EU in this region;
- combining effective multilateralism, joint soft power and credible hard power can be capable of confronting major security challenges, notably the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the violation of the security order in Europe, terrorism, conflicts in the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood, proxy wars, hybrid and information warfare, including digital aggression, and energy insecurity;
- identify common strategic priorities and visions by addressing the root causes of instability, which is spread mainly through failed or fragile states, as well as forced and irregular migration;
- counter autocratic and nepotistic trends, to intensify support for democratic forces and to fight against Islamist terrorism in the Southern neighbourhood and among the neighbours of our neighbours and partners, and to target those groups which seek to encourage EU citizens to fight for their extremist cause. Tackling violent extremism should go hand in hand with upholding universal human rights.

The report emphasised that a sustainable solution to the Syrian crisis can only be achieved under the existing UN-agreed framework and needs to be based on an inclusive, Syrian-led political settlement involving all relevant stakeholders.

2) Consolidating and deepening the European project and the Union's external action by, inter alia, enhancing the EUs cooperation and capabilities in the field of its common foreign and security policy, including information warfare.

Stressing that the current decision-making process in CFSP, based on unanimity in the Council, was the main obstacle to effective and timely external EU action, Members suggested that qualified majority voting should also be applied for CFSP. EU institutions should improve their ability to anticipate conflicts and crises, including by means of an assessment of the short- and long-term impact of its policies.

Europe should:

- step up their efforts to increase the EUs ability to confront hybrid and cyber threats through the development of the industrial and technological resources needed for this purpose;
- strengthen cooperation on common defence, in order to defend its common values and principles and strategic autonomy;
- fully exploit the potential of the European Defence Agency (EDA), permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) and EU Battlegroups and have additional funding available for this purpose;
- develop effective foreign and security policy, and must work together with NATO and other international partners, the UN, NGOs, human rights defenders, and others on issues of shared concern and in order to promote peace, prosperity and stability around the world.

Member States should aim for the target of 2% of GDP on defence spending and allocate 20% of their defence budgets to equipment identified as necessary by the EDA.

3) Cooperation between Member States, partners, and international organisations and institutions protecting peace within clearly defined and carefully chosen conditions to strengthen the rules-based, global political and economic order, including the protection of human rights, and working together with partners to play a leading role in reconciliation, peace-making, peacekeeping and, where needed, peace enforcement.