

Franco-Finnish statement on European defence

Faced with increasing and multifaceted threats, Europeans have sped up the work towards a stronger and more secure Europe. In recent years, they have demonstrated in concrete terms that European defence is built not only through a shared analysis of risks and strategic challenges but also through de facto European solidarity. When, following the attacks of 13 November 2015, France invoked, for the first time in the history of the European Union, the mutual assistance clause provided for in Article 42(7) of the TEU, Finland stood resolutely by its side, as part of a joint effort in the fight against terrorism.

Europe's security also depends on its ability to adapt its resilience to the security challenges it faces. France and Finland welcome the progress made in recent months in this area, including efforts to strengthen the Union's capacity to counter hybrid threats and to develop its strategic communication capabilities.

In June 2016, pleading for a strengthening of the EU's common security and defence policy, France and Finland called on member states to intensify their defence cooperation. This objective has since made unprecedented progress. It is our collective responsibility to maintain the momentum for the practical and operational implementation of the principle of European strategic autonomy.

France and Finland now call for more to be done, so that Europeans have by the next decade a stronger autonomous capacity to intervene militarily together to defend their security and defence interests, supported by a strong and innovative European defence industry and by appropriate common budgetary instruments.

In order to promote Europeans' operational commitments where their security is at stake, France and Finland are calling for the emergence of a genuine common European strategic culture based on defence cooperation with agreed mutual dependence. All bilateral or multilateral cooperation must make it possible to deal head-on with the terrorist threat, hybrid threats and power policies. The European Intervention Initiative, launched on France's initiative, aims to foster the emergence of a common European strategic culture and to strengthen Europeans' ability to respond together to crises affecting their security in addition to existing frameworks, including EU or NATO operations.

EU defence cooperation, and notably CSDP, must be developed in line with the EU Global Strategy, contributing both to the external crises and protecting the Union and its citizens.

On the one hand, the European Union has positioned itself to respond to the rise of new threats, particularly hybrid or cyber threats, which are part of the continuum between the internal and external security challenges it faces. The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats based in Helsinki contributes to the development of response strategies to these threats in the framework of EU-NATO cooperation. On the other hand, France and Finland encourage the contribution of the new tools, as well as the extension of joint financing of operations, to CSDP interventions across the spectrum of commitments, including the most demanding.

France and Finland give their full support to the strengthening of the European financing of the military capabilities of the EU's partners. France and Finland reiterate their support for the creation of a dedicated instrument, strengthening the coherence and effectiveness of our action in support of partners' capacities in security and defence and with regard to this objective welcome the proposal to create a European Peace Facility. This instrument should be based on the EU level of ambition and on a detailed need assessment of the EU partner's. In this regard they highlight the importance of the challenges that must be addressed, in the coming years, in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Improving military mobility in Europe is essential to the credibility and responsiveness of Europeans to contribute to their security. France and Finland recall their particular attachment to this subject, demonstrated by their strong involvement in all the work. France and Finland are encouraging the implementation of the ambitious commitments made by Europeans in this field, in good coordination with the work carried out at the EU and NATO.

European strategic autonomy is also based on developing a full spectrum of defence capabilities through the creation of a European Defence Fund, in the framework of the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and in accordance with the commitments made under Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO).

An ambitious PESCO should enable a qualitative leap in European defence. The commitments, which materialise our ambition, must be fulfilled. France and Finland, which jointly participate in projects on military mobility, the ESSOR software radio system and cyber defence, are committed to working as closely as possible with operational realities so that new unifying projects that meet the needs of the armed forces can be implemented in the coming months.

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France and Finland welcome the European Commission's determination to address the challenges facing the European defence industry, in particular through the creation of a European Defence Fund. It will contribute to the Union's strategic autonomy by promoting technological and industrial cooperation, helping to build a solid, coherent and innovative European defence industrial and technological base, including support mechanisms for SMEs.

France and Finland call for a strong contribution in the next multiannual financial framework to Europe defense and security, through sustained and ambitious levels of funding, notably for the European Defence Fund.

These efforts will be multiplied through a strong network of concrete bilateral and multilateral cooperation involving both defence capabilities and operational aspects.