

On Thursday, 19 May 2011 the European Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. Following its December 2010 Conclusions, the Council reiterates the need to turn the financial crisis and its impact on national defence budgets into an opportunity for greater cooperation in the area of capability development. It welcomes the High Representative's interim report on CSDP/"Military Elements" as an important contribution to this end.

2. The Council calls for a structured and long-term approach to pooling and sharing, based on a high level of ambition, in a wide array of capability areas, and leading to concrete results. While shorter-term quick-win initiatives can have a useful stimulating effect, the Council encourages Member States to apply pooling and sharing on a systematic and sustainable basis, promoting multinational cooperation, including on a regional basis, as a key method to preserve and develop military capabilities in Europe for sustaining and enhancing CSDP.

3. In this context, the Council welcomes the initial inputs and findings from Member States' national analyses as a first step towards enhanced transparency among Member States and more pooling and sharing initiatives. These initial findings, collected and compiled by the EU Military Committee supported by the Military Staff, have shown opportunities in a variety of areas, including research and technology, procurement, maintenance logistics, education and training. As part of this effort, the Council stresses the need to further explore role specialization.

4. The Council, while reiterating the Member States' driving role in defining and committing voluntarily to concrete pooling and sharing projects, stresses the added value of work at the EU level to support and foster this, taking advantage of the political momentum, notably by mapping ongoing and forthcoming cooperation, identifying best practices, models for cooperation and criteria for success, and developing other supporting tools and providing expertise in other areas such as interoperability and standardisation as part of the work undertaken by various EU bodies.

The Council also encourages the European Defence Agency to continue to contribute to this work by further supporting participating Member States in identifying opportunities for pooling and sharing, including through senior-level external support offered by participating Member States on a voluntary basis, and analysing its potential industrial implications. It welcomes the intention of the Agency to submit proposals to that end.

5. The Council welcomes close contacts with NATO on pooling and sharing, including staff-to-staff contacts. It underlines the need to pursue such contacts in order to ensure coherence.

6. The Council welcomes the engagement of individual Member States to develop, on the basis of the proposals and ideas put forward, further pooling and sharing initiatives by extending existing projects to other partners and/or by setting up new cooperative projects, also building on the commitment by the national Chiefs of Defence to establish multilateral contacts to that end.

7. The Council will examine progress and achievements on a regular basis, first in the autumn of 2011, including on the basis of the High Representative's forthcoming report on CSDP and of inputs by Member States. As part of this, the Council will consider an extraordinary session at ministerial level where Member States could declare their intentions with regard to new cooperative initiatives.