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Address by the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Cyprus

Mr. Demetris Eliades

Seminar "On the Road with CSDP", Brussels

I welcome you to the seminar "On the Road with CSDP" which is co-organised by the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Cyprus, the Representation of the Free State of Bavaria to the EU and the Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations within the framework of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU.

The assumption of the Presidency of the Council of the EU by Cyprus is an exceptional moment and a major challenge. We are a small country and a new member state. We do not have a great number of experts, technocrats and specialists; neither do we have previous experience. Nevertheless, nothing prevents us from being diligent, serious and responsible; from having ideas, proposals, suggestions; from taking initiatives; from being creative.

We function in full cooperation with the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton, the European External Action Service and all our partners. We function with objectivity, moderation and in the spirit of consensus, so as to serve our Common Security and Defence Policy, for the peace of Europe and its people.

Security has always been and still remains an indivisible privilege and undeniable right. Security constitutes the basic condition for maintaining peace, stability and uninterrupted economic and social growth.

The contribution of the Ministry of Defence was planned in the framework of our common effort to further boost the current issues of concern. Taking into consideration this conception, on the road with CSDP, the Ministry identified its contribution through four interrelated

levels: The development of the EU Military Capabilities, the promotion of the International Security, with particular emphasis on maritime security and the Middle East, the promotion of a common culture in the domain of CSDP and finally, the publication of books related with the CSDP.

Our contribution to security and defence issues is also extended to the European Defence Agency's (EDA) field of work through the joint organization of seminars and workshops both in Cyprus and in Brussels.

The problems in the defence sector with the financial crisis are encountered with wise and flexible initiatives such as those of Gent and Pooling and Sharing.

The collective work and professional support of the EEAS and the EDA, from every point of view, will undoubtedly generate positive results and balance the economic and security factors thus aiming at the effective and productive management of our limited resources.

Due to the current economic crisis, the EU has to use every available option like the Pooling and Sharing Initiative, in order to mitigate its identified capability problems, in the most cost-efficient manner.

To this end we organized in close co-operation with the EDA and the Egmont Institute a seminar in Brussels on the 19th of September 2012 concerning the "Innovative European Defence Cooperation-Pooling and Consolidating Demand".

Regarding the Middle East, we are all witnessing the dramatic changes in the region with great concern and agony. Authoritarian regimes are being overthrown and new forces are emerging to the forefront of internal developments, of political reforms and regional balances.

The crucial question is what will follow the turbulence and the changes that are underway. If the overthrow of authoritarian regimes is followed

by the emergence of other authoritarian regimes, then what Arab Spring are we talking about? We will be led from one Arab Winter to another.

The developments in the region concern and involve the EU for many and obvious reasons, whilst our interaction and interest, emanate from our proximity to the countries of the region.

The EU should be in a position to develop multidimensional relations with the peoples of the region; relations of cooperation in politics, economy, energy, growth, security, culture, education, environment etc. Dialogue, mutual respect and understanding are useful tools in this effort. In this framework Cyprus could be a credible bridge between the EU and the Middle East.

The EU can and should support the people of the region to overcome the crisis through political solutions and establish their own democratic institutions, democratic societies and democratic states, with respect to human and political rights. This is the most solid basis for peace, security and stability in the region according to international law.

In this context, our Presidency organized and held in Nicosia a very successful seminar on the subject, on the 2nd and 3rd of July, 2012. The issue was discussed during the Informal Meeting of the EU Defence Policy Directors and it was also included in the agenda of the recent Informal Meeting of the EU Defence Ministers held in Nicosia on the 26th and 27th of September.

Another global problem of our times is the strategic control of the oceans and the maritime security. For this, important policies, activities and programmes have been initiated at the EU level, in order to improve maritime security, which is already a significant component of the EU Counterterrorism Strategy. The EU also maintains deployed naval forces as part of its global and comprehensive approach, in an effort to fight piracy in the region of the Horn of Africa.

Within this mind-set, the Ministry of Defence of Cyprus, during the Presidency, is taking initiatives to promote issues that concern both maritime security and development of military capabilities in this field. We organised, on the 6th of September, in Paris, a successful high level Seminar on Maritime Security in the Mediterranean in co-operation with the Ministry of Defence of France and another seminar regarding the European initiatives in the maritime environment on the 18th and 19th of October in Nicosia, in cooperation with the EDA.

The issue of piracy in the waters of Somalia and the recently decided actions regarding the regional maritime capacity in the Horn of Africa, will be examined in detail during another seminar organised by the Cyprus Presidency in co-operation with the European External Action Service in Cyprus on the 12th and 13th November 2012. It is important that the seminar will also be attended by a number of officials from the region of the Horn of Africa.

The Presidency also supports the objectives of the European Security and Defence College, especially in the field of a joint military culture by promoting the military Erasmus and by undertaking a pioneering initiative, through the organization of the “1st Common Security and Defence Olympiad”, between cadets of military academies of EU Member States. This proposal submitted by Cyprus, was unanimously adopted by the Board of Directors of the European Security and Defence College. The 1st Olympiad was successfully concluded last month in Cyprus and received excellent remarks.

Additionally, the Ministry will proceed with the publication of the studies of the cadets who participated in the Olympiad, of a textbook titled “Developing Military Capabilities in the context of CSDP” and of a booklet that will include the contribution of the Ministry in the CSDP.

The EU, as a global factor, emerges as a calm, cultured and trustworthy force with political and economic initiatives with a pioneering presence in the fields of humanitarian and development assistance.

The C.S.D.P. of the EU serves peace, security, stability and growth in Europe and the World. The recent Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the EU is a strong recognition of the role of the EU and a clear message for the future prospects. It is also a major incentive for the EU to proceed forward on the Road with CSDP.

The Ministry of Defence of Cyprus, through its program and initiatives in the framework of the Presidency, within a rapidly and drastically changing international environment, aims at defining the capabilities and prospects of development of the CSDP for the post-Lisbon era.

We focused our efforts on the development of EU Military Capabilities, international security, the promotion of a common culture in the domain of the CSDP and the publication of studies related to the CSDP.

Through these interrelated issues we try to promote cooperation, solidarity and mutual assistance between the Member States and bring the society of European citizens closer to the CSDP. With common perceptions and joint efforts we could achieve our common goals towards an optimistic peaceful and secure future.

On the Road with CSDP, we all share a common vision for a better Europe and a better World. We, also, share a common belief, that a better Europe is needed for a better World.

Finally, I would like to warmly thank the Representation of the Free State of Bavaria to the EU and the Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations for their excellent cooperation and hospitality. I also, express deep appreciation to the Chairs of the Panels and to the speakers for their significant contribution.

Thank you all for honouring us with your presence.