



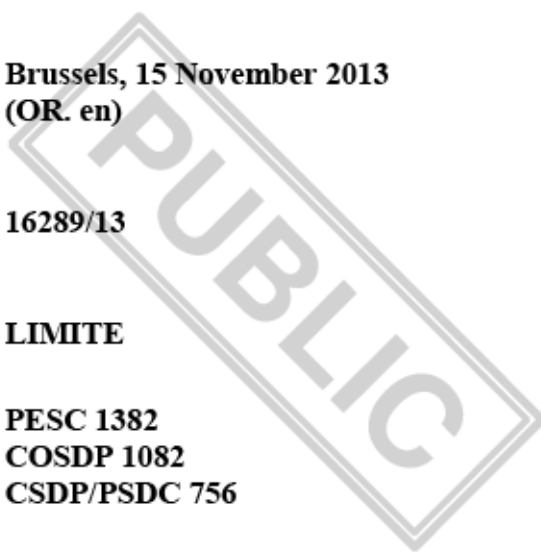
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NOTE

From: Political and Security Committee

To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

Subject: EU Rapid Response Capabilities and EU Battlegroups

Delegations will find in Annex the EEAS note on EU Rapid Response Capabilities and EU Battlegroups, as agreed by the Political and Security Committee on 15 November 2013.

EU RAPID RESPONSE CAPABILITIES AND EU BATTLE GROUPS

Considerations

1. The EU has the ambition to act as a security provider in its neighbourhood and globally, to protect its interests and contribute to international peace and security. At the end of last year, Heads of State and Government supported the need to enhance CSDP's effectiveness, visibility and impact. To that effect, and with a view to its meeting on security and defence planned for next December, the European Council in December 2012 called for proposals to be developed on strengthening "the EU's ability to deploy the right civilian and military capabilities rapidly and effectively across the whole spectrum of crisis management action".
2. With regard to military rapid response, the case for highly capable and interoperable forces, available at very short notice for CSDP operations, is stronger than ever. EU Battlegroups¹ continue to be the flagship military rapid response tool. They are instrumental in helping reinforce the interoperability and effectiveness of Member States' military forces, but have yet to be deployed. The lack of political will and perceived limitations to a fair burden-sharing, notably financially, are amongst the most cited impediments to BGs' deployability. Moreover, considerable gaps remain in the roster of BGs' offers and commitments for the next coming years.
3. EU Defence Ministers have underlined the need to improve the effective employment of the BGs as part of the broader EU rapid response. The EU's toolbox, which includes BGs and other capabilities, needs to be further improved and developed in order to allow a better response to a range of crises and scenarios, also reinforcing its ability to conduct a joint operation (i.e. with capabilities from two or more of the land, maritime and air domains).

¹ Hereafter the abbreviation "BGs" is used when referring to the EU Battlegroups.

- I. Developing further EU rapid response capabilities and maximising their flexibility and utility with a view to enhancing the Union's ability to respond to crises.**
4. This could include in particular further analysing the capabilities required to support rapid response operations/missions. Specific attention could be given to "enabling capabilities" indispensable to carry out the full spectrum of tasks. The availability of a more coherent suite of (maritime, air, land) assets including niche modules should provide greater flexibility and scope for tailoring the rapid response force (including EU BGs) for the operations at hand.
 5. A revision of the overarching Military Rapid Response Concept, together with the Air and Maritime Rapid Response Concepts, would be conducive to a more accurate description of the EU's rapid response capabilities (air, maritime and land, including BGs) and the modalities for using them. Generic rapid response scenarios should be identified in order to deduce the type of actions, tasks and requirements - and improve the understanding of the capabilities required. As part of this work, a training and advising module could be developed, in light of the growing need for such capability in the field as demonstrated by the lessons from EUTM Somalia and Mali. Capabilities provided by Member States, for a certain period of time, would be registered and prepared in advance so as to be attached to any given BG or used in other rapid response operations. Specific requirements - notably in terms of structure, resources, readiness, and training, will need to be further elaborated.
 6. In addition, and building on the experience of the last years, there is scope to further develop the ability of the EEAS rapidly to deploy multi-disciplinary assessment teams in order to identify the most appropriate use of EU civil and military instruments to be proposed to Member States, and thus inform early decision-making.

II. Increasing the Battlegroups' usability as an integral part of the EU Rapid Response

7. There is a general desire from the Member States to make the BGs more usable, while maintaining the common commitment to this military tool and the level of ambition (two BGs on standby at any moment). Solidarity and burden-sharing are and remain at the heart of CSDP, but Member States' willingness to deploy forces might vary from one concrete situation to another. Hence the need for BGs to be flexible enough to incorporate, in a modular way, rapid response capabilities of the Member States' most willing to engage in a given operation.

Framework Nation Approach

8. Efforts should continue to fill the gaps in the BG roster, with voluntary commitments of the Member States using the Framework Nation approach agreed in 2012 which promotes predictability, consistency and a more equitable sharing of the burden. Additional and/or more frequent commitments are indeed necessary to sustain the BG roster. In that regard, voluntary commitments for longer stand-by periods (e.g. 12 months) would contribute to mitigating the existing gaps and make more effective use of limited resources, whilst improving the effectiveness of Member States' training efforts. A similar approach (lead nations) could usefully apply to the provision of specialised/niche capabilities.

Modularity

9. The scope of operations/missions where BGs could be deployed is broad; however, Member States commit to the BG roster without knowing in advance the nature of deployments that could be decided by the Council. Accordingly, flexibility of design is essential to provide the EU with tools readily available. This can be achieved through strengthening the inherent modularity of the BGs, which may also help spread the burden of commitments by potentially allowing for broader participation of Member States. Several avenues could be explored to enhance modularity, notably:

- a. making the BGs more adaptable to the range of likely forthcoming crises, through a better definition of the capabilities required and the effects to be achieved, and better taking into account current circumstances in the scenarios' reviews. Also advance planning in the EEAS would help better define the most likely requirements that would contribute to shape BGs;
- b. adding to the activated BG, if required, auxiliary/niche capabilities modules (consistently with the identification of possible additional assets under the EU Rapid Response Concept referred to in section I above). The BG being the most likely and main building block of such an EU military rapid response, the intention would be to add assets (especially key enablers not foreseen in a regular BG composition) to its core capabilities and potential. In this way, with a wider selection of enablers available for deployment, the EU BG package, tailored to the mission, would be able to meet more appropriately a wider set of tasks and thus become more usable;
- c. allowing, in a smooth and rapid way, Member States able and willing to provide needed capabilities and to participate in a BG operation to step in, and Member States on stand-by to adapt to the specific context and to tailor the BG to the crisis at hand.

Exercises, training and certification for rapid response

10. Enhancing and streamlining the exercises and certification involving BGs – including the possibility of live exercises – would improve the interoperability, readiness and effectiveness of the Member States' forces, it being understood that these exercises/certification will remain the responsibility of the participating Member States. The following steps could be explored:
 - a. improve the certification process of the BGs under the responsibility of the Framework Nation by offering the possibility of inviting a multi-national evaluation team involving all the participating countries and/or introducing peer-review between BGs, associating also the EEAS/EU Military Staff;

- b. improve interaction amongst the BGs as well as between them and the EU-level, notably by increasing the opportunity to observe BGs preparatory exercises and linking better to the EU cycle of exercises. This, to be aligned with OHQ and FHQ training, would allow testing the BG's ability to deploy quickly and efficiently in the field. The possible inclusion of exercises related to the training and preparation of the BGs in the EU Exercise Policy under review and future EU Exercise Programmes could be considered;
- c. engage the political level e.g. through Political Exercises (POLEX) – identified as a best practice – or other exercises.

Advance planning

- 11. A closer, more structured involvement of EU BGs in advance planning could enhance their readiness to respond to emerging crises. Such approach would allow Member States to tailor and shape their BGs, thus enhancing flexibility and focusing response while also informing the BGs exercises. To that aim the following steps are recommended:
 - a. generic planning: (i) during the pre-stand by period for the BG on call, the Framework Nation together with the Troop Contributing Nations could interact with the EEAS by attending Key Leader Seminars. This would allow the BG leadership early access to/and understanding of EU instruments as well as Brussels structures and key decision-makers; (ii) the OHQ (either the Framework Nation or the BG preferred OHQ) could appoint a liaison officer to regularly interact with EEAS for in-house updates and exchanges of views (as established this year with success for the UK-led BG);
 - b. strengthening and deploying the liaison element of the OHQ (but also the BG) to work alongside the EEAS CSDP services would allow the potential military commanders understanding of how contingency planning is developing and thereby enabling them to shape their BG as required.

Political decision making

12. Rapid deployment also asks for rapid decision-making. Improvements in that regard require preparing the ground for political consent, for instance through discussions on potential crises ("horizon scanning") at various levels including ministerial, or exercises involving the political level (POLEX) held by BGs on standby.

NATO and UN

13. Close contacts between the EEAS and NATO will allow seeking synergies between the EU and NATO in the field of rapid response where requirements overlap, retaining best practices, and avoiding unnecessary duplication. Cooperation will also help preserve and improve when necessary and possible develop synergies, as well as preserve and improve, when necessary and possible, the commonality between standards and criteria with due respect to the decision-making autonomy of the EU and NATO.
14. The EU-UN partnership in crisis management is another important dimension relevant to the work on improving EU rapid response including BGs.

Financial aspects

15. Costs associated to committing troops are key elements in national decisions to deploy forces, and financial aspects could provide a leverage to facilitate BGs' deployment. Fair burden-sharing (encompassing commitment, risks and financial costs) should help promote the utility of the BGs as an effective tool for crisis management. Also, there is a need for burden-sharing between Framework Nations and Troop Contributing Nations.

16. Against this background, a broader political discussion on the principles and approaches to burden-sharing among Member States, in particular for rapid response operations, is needed. This is a sensitive issue, which should be taken forward as a separate work strand. The following options could be considered in view of the upcoming revision of the ATHENA mechanism, without prejudice to its outcome, and on the basis of the necessary preparatory work:
- a. in order to reduce unpredictability, the provisions of the Declaration on strategic deployment of BGs could be included as common costs, on a permanent basis, into the ATHENA Council Decision²;
 - b. when the Council decides to launch a rapid response operation, the elements covered upon request of the Operations Commander (acquisition of information and other critical theatre-level capabilities, as provided in Annex III, Part C) could be included in the common costs always covered (Annex III, Part A);
 - c. during the preparation of a BG and/or during the stand by period, exercises and certification could be financed through the Athena budget, if and when they are part of the EU Exercise Programme.

Way ahead

17. Following the Foreign Affairs Council in November 2013, work on the proposals set out in this Note should be taken forward, with the Member States, with a view to their swift implementation.

² Council Decision 2011/871/CFSP of 19 December 2011, OJ L 343, 23.12.2011, p. 35