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Ninth progress report on the implementation of the common set of proposals endorsed by EU and NATO Councils on 6 December 2016 and 5 December 2017

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Ninth progress report on the implementation of the common set of proposals endorsed by EU and NATO Councils on 6 December 2016 and 5 December 2017**Political Introduction**

The EU and NATO face growing and complex threats and challenges, including those stemming from geostrategic competition affecting the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area. Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine continues to pose an unprecedented threat to European, transatlantic and global security, and undermines international peace and stability. Instability is on the rise in many regions across the globe. The war in Gaza, tensions in the Western Balkans, Eastern Neighbourhood, the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea are some of the examples. The Indo-Pacific region is of key importance for both organisations. NATO and the EU remain firmly committed to upholding the rules-based international order based on the respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

This is a key juncture for Euro-Atlantic security and stability, more than ever demonstrating the importance of the transatlantic bond and close NATO-EU cooperation. The two organisations continue to play complementary, coherent and mutually-reinforcing roles in supporting international peace and security to the benefit of all NATO Allies and EU Member States, with a view to upholding and promoting the shared values and interests of the Euro-Atlantic community.

The present, ninth report on the implementation of the 74 common proposals – which were endorsed by the EU and NATO Councils in parallel processes in 2016 and 2017 – elaborates on progress achieved between June 2023 and May 2024 by demonstrating concrete deliverables across the entire spectrum of our cooperation agenda, underpinned by our continued robust political dialogue.

The following elements deserve to be highlighted in particular:

- In the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, NATO and EU continued to demonstrate unprecedented political unity, among others through maximizing their respective assistance to Ukraine. Ensuring coherence and complementarity of efforts in responding to Russia's war of aggression and in supporting Ukraine's inherent right to self-defence, remains a top priority for as long as it takes.
- In that context, regular contacts between senior officials and their cross-participation in respective high-level meetings as well as regular staff consultations at all levels continued. This included, among others, interactions in the framework of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group, respective meetings of National Armaments Directors as well as the dedicated EU-NATO Staff Coordination on Ukraine.
- Intensive political dialogue was maintained at the highest level, including through the participation of the NATO Secretary General in the European Council of June 2023 and in a meeting of the College of Commissioners in November 2023, as well as the participation of the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission at the NATO Summit in Vilnius in July 2023. Regular cross-participation of the EU High Representative and the NATO Secretary General at EU Foreign Affairs Councils (Defence) and NATO Defence and Foreign Ministerial meetings continued apace. In the reporting period, more than 50 reciprocal cross-briefings took place in respective Councils, committees and

working groups. Well-established staff interaction in all areas of the NATO – EU partnership was further strengthened and expanded, including by launching four new structured dialogues on space, cyber, climate and defence, emerging and disruptive technologies. A dedicated structured dialogue on defence industry is being explored.

- The Task Force on the resilience of critical infrastructure, established by NATO Secretary General and the President of the European Commission in response to the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines, presented its final assessment report in June 2023; the implementation of its recommendations is being taken forward in the context of the EU-NATO Structured Dialogue on Resilience.
- The two Organisations have stepped up their efforts and close interaction in the field of crisis management exercises, notably through agreeing to extend the Plan for Implementation of Parallel and Coordinated Exercises (PACE) for the period of 2024-2025.

The NATO-EU strategic partnership continues to be taken forward in full respect of the agreed guiding principles enshrined in the three Joint Declarations on EU-NATO cooperation.

In light of the current challenges to international peace and stability, and with the full engagement and continued support by all NATO Allies and EU Member States, both staffs remain firmly committed to further strengthen, deepen and expand their mutually beneficial cooperation by exploring avenues for further collaboration across all work strands.

Countering Hybrid Threats

EU and NATO staffs continued their regular interactions and cross-briefings to respective committees on countering hybrid threats. In February 2024, NATO briefed the EU's Politico-Military Group (PMG) and the Horizontal Working Party on Enhancing Resilience and Countering Hybrid Threats (HWP ERCHT) on NATO's responses to hybrid threats, particularly regarding Russia and China, while the EEAS briefed NATO's Operations Policy Committee on the EU Hybrid Toolbox and other response mechanisms in countering hybrid threats. Staffs continued to engage in the activities of the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki (Hybrid CoE), which grew to include a total of 35 NATO Allies and EU Member States. In October 2023, both staffs participated in the Hybrid CoE's fourth High-Level Retreat, which focused on China's hybrid threat activities.

Regular and structured exchanges between the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell, NATO's Intelligence Production Unit and the Hybrid CoE have become routine practice. The EU's Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC) and NATO's Joint Intelligence and Security Division (JISD) continued regular exchanges in respective geographical and thematic clusters. In the reporting period, both staffs continued the established practice of preparing Parallel and Coordinated Assessments (PACAs), with two PACAs issued, one on threats of disruption to critical infrastructure, and the other regarding the growing cooperation between Iran and Russia.

The Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) and the EU Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) continued to build on their regular cooperation on civil emergencies to ensure their respective responses complement each other. In the reporting period, staffs coordinated the respective responses in particular for the floods in Slovenia in August 2023, and the broader response to the war in Ukraine.

Staff cooperation on resilience has substantially expanded as an essential part of EU-NATO cooperation. For the first time, EU representatives attended the meeting of senior Allied officials responsible for resilience in November 2023. In February 2024, senior EU officials participated in the plenary session of the NATO Resilience Committee at Policy Directors level, and in April 2024, senior NATO officials attended the meeting of EU Directors General for Civil Protection. In September 2023, NATO staff briefed the European Commission's Critical Entities Resilience Group on NATO's approach to critical infrastructure resilience. In November 2023, EU staff briefed NATO's Resilience Committee on the Critical Entities Resilience Directive, while NATO staff participated in a workshop on medical evacuation, organised by the EU Military Staff, with a follow-up discussion between the staffs and senior national officials on medical preparedness in the context of collective defence planned in June 2024.

The Structured Dialogue on Resilience continued to ensure coherence and coordination of efforts between relevant work strands, including by implementing the recommendations of the EU-NATO Task Force on the resilience of critical infrastructure. In particular, progress has been made in the areas of civil-military cooperation, security research, critical undersea infrastructure, engagement with the private sector, and exercises. In April 2024, the Hybrid CoE facilitated a scenario-based foresight workshop on critical infrastructure for NATO and EU policy planners. The European Defence Agency (EDA) and the NATO Centre of Excellence for Confined and Shallow Waters co-organised a table-top exercise on critical maritime infrastructure protection with the participation of the Hybrid CoE and Allied Maritime Command (MARCOM).

Cooperation on issues related to Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) defence and resilience continued at a steady pace, including through dedicated staff talks in February 2024, focusing on the implications of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the implementation of

NATO's CBRN Defence Policy, and capacity-building activities for partners. NATO's Joint CBRN Defence Centre of Excellence continued to cooperate with the EU on related defence training and capacity-building activities, and particularly regarding training for CBRN Consequence Management and mobile training for various aspects of emergency response.

Cooperation on counterterrorism (CT) continued through dedicated staff talks on battlefield evidence, technical exploitation, capacity building for partners, Countering Unmanned Aircraft Systems (C-UAS), new technologies, and human security aspects. The NATO Secretary General's newly appointed Special Coordinator for Counterterrorism (NATO SGSCCT) met the EU CT Coordinator to discuss issues relevant for both organisations. The NATO SGSCCT, the EEAS Special Envoy for CT, and the EU CT Coordinator participated together with staffs and national officials in two informal seminars organised by the Presidencies of the Council of the EU: in December 2023, by the Spanish Presidency on battlefield evidence; in March 2024, by the Belgian Presidency on CT priorities and engagement in Northern Africa.

In March and May 2024, CT issues were addressed respectively as part of the NATO-EU staff talks on operations and capacity building for partners. Throughout the reporting period, both staffs engaged on CT, including capacity building for partners in the margins of meetings of the Coalition to Defeat ISIS. In January 2024, staff exchanges took place to discuss issues of common interest, including the implementation of EU's C-UAS communication.

On Strategic Communications, staffs continued their robust engagement by exchanging real-time insights, reports and analysis on hostile information activities and Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI), including disinformation.

Staffs improved shared situational awareness, including through the use of the EEAS-led Rapid Alert System (RAS) and the Commission's Network against Disinformation, as well as by sharing insights on Russia's and China's activities in the information environment.

In order to build a shared methodology for addressing common threats in the information environment, staffs conducted reciprocal training for data analysts, sharing best practices. They also discussed respective analytical tools and capability development. EU staff took part in the NATO Senior Communicators Conference in November 2023, and in December 2023, staffs co-hosted an event to promote EU-NATO cooperation during the EEAS-organised multilateral conference, bringing together EU institutions, EU Member States, NATO representatives, and G7 Rapid Response Mechanism communities (G7 RRM). EU took part in the NATO panel on "Countering the Russian Manipulation of History and False Historical Narratives", and shared updates at the annual NATO Information Environment Assessment Tiger Team workshops hosted by the Headquarters of NATO Rapid Deployable Corps in Spain. Both staffs regularly participated in the G7 RRM and attended its Focal Points Meetings. In January 2024, NATO's Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy attended the EU high-level FIMI Conference hosted by the EU High Representative/Vice President.

Staffs continued to coordinate public communications in areas of common interest, including cross-amplification of respective communications campaigns, engagement with respective visitors' groups, as well as regular interaction between the NATO and EU Spokespersons.

Operational cooperation including maritime issues

Staff dialogue and the practice of reciprocal cross-briefings to respective NATO and EU Committees continued on a regular basis.

The first ever staff talks on operational cooperation took place in June 2023. Discussions centred on land and sea operations and missions, crisis management engagements and advance planning. The second iteration was held in March 2024 with exchanges focusing on missions in the Western Balkans and the Middle East/North Africa, crisis management engagements and crisis response.

At the dedicated annual maritime staff talks in April 2024, with the participation of Allied Maritime Command (MARCOM) and the NATO Naval Mine Warfare Centre of Excellence, a wide range of topics was covered, including both organisations' naval operations and the protection and security of critical undersea infrastructure and unexploded ordnances at sea. NATO staff briefed on the Maritime Dimension of NATO's Area of Responsibility Management and its Deterrence and Defence plans in the Euro-Atlantic Area and provided an update on the Digital Ocean Initiative. EU staff briefed on the revised EU Maritime Security Strategy and associated Action Plan of October 2023, on activities conducted in the framework of the EU Coordinated Maritime Presences in the Gulf of Guinea and in the North-Western Indian Ocean, as well as on the 2023 revised Capability Development Plan Maritime Priorities.

In September 2023, NATO staff briefed the EU Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CivCom) on the evolution of the NATO Mission in Iraq. In January 2024, the EEAS briefed the NATO Operations Policy Committee in 'KFOR' format (NATO Allies and KFOR operational partners) on the EU's Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). In March 2024, the EEAS briefed the NATO Operations Policy Committee on the new Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) naval operation, EUNAVFOR ASPIDES.

In December 2023, the 12th edition of the Shared Awareness and De-confliction in the Mediterranean (SHADE MED) Conference was co-organised by EUNAVFOR MED IRINI and MARCOM in Rome under the theme "Managing common challenges together in the Mediterranean".

In parallel, NATO's activity in the Aegean Sea continued to link with Frontex in assisting Greece and Türkiye to counter irregular migration.

The EU and NATO continued to lead the aviation normalization process in the Western Balkans, with some technical progress made, including the establishment of new air routes via Albania, with beneficial impact on civil aviation, flight times, fuel consumption, and pollution.

Cyber security and defence

Engagement between EU and NATO staffs intensified, as reflected by the decision to upgrade the annual high-level staff talks on cyber security and defence to a Structured Dialogue on Cyber.

In this format, informal thematic sub-working groups have been set up to further streamline the exchanges. For example, staffs discussed possible synergies among respective tools to address malicious cyber activities, such as between the NATO's Guide for Strategic Response Options to Significant Malicious Cyber Activities and the EU Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox. In addition, they addressed possible enhanced cooperation on Cyber Defence Education, Training and Exercises. They continued to coordinate on cyber capacity building in the Western Balkans and other partners, including through the annual EU-NATO staff talks on Capacity Building and the NATO-EU Staff Coordination on Ukraine. In addition, they engaged to avoid unnecessary duplication and explore the development of potential synergies of the EU Cyber Census and NATO's Cyber Defence Pledge.

The European Security and Defence College (ESDC) and the NATO Communications and Information Agency Academy exchanged information on the respective operating models and

academic programmes. A process to reinforce cooperation between the ESDC and the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence was set up.

NATO staff briefed the EU Politico-Military Group, reinforced by the Horizontal Working Party on Cyber Issues, on its cyber defence policy. In addition, EU staff briefed NATO's Cyber Defence Committee on the revised implementing guidelines of the Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox.

Regarding cyber exercises, NATO staff participated as observers in the 2023 Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox Table-top Exercise in the EU Horizontal Working Party on Cyber Issues in November 2023. EU staff participated in NATO's Cyber Coalition 23 exercise organised by NATO Allied Command Transformation (ACT), and in the international cyber defence exercise Locked Shields, organised by the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence. NATO has invited the EU Military Staff and the EEAS to participate in Coalition Warrior Interoperability Exercise (CWIX) 2024. EU staff have been invited to participate in Cyber Coalition 24.

EU staff participated in the annual International Conference on Cyber Conflict organised by the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCoE) in June 2023. The EDA participated in the NATO Annual Discipline Conference in July 2023 and provided an update on EDA Cyber activities. Cooperation between the EDA and NATO CCDCoE continued, including through participation in the EDA Project Team Cyber Defence meetings.

The exchange of concepts is ongoing: the "EU Military Vision and Strategy for Cyberspace as a Domain of Operations" as well as the "Cyber Defence Concept for EU-led military operations and missions" were released to NATO staff; "NATO's Comprehensive Cyber Defence Policy" was released to the EEAS.

The Technical Arrangement concerning cooperation on Cyber Defence between the NATO Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and the Cybersecurity Service for the EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies (CERT-EU) continued to be implemented in line with existing provisions. Exchanges on best practices and coordination continued through regular staff meetings, a coordination meeting at Heads of Organisations' level, as well as targeted thematic workshops on technical issues of mutual interest. In addition, the Malware Information Sharing Platform continued to be leveraged to facilitate exchanges.

Defence capabilities

Efforts continue to ensure the coherence of output between the EU Capability Development Plan (CDP), the Headline Goal Process (HLGP) and the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and respective NATO processes such as the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP) and the Partnership for Peace Planning and Review Process (PARP), where requirements overlap, while recognising the different nature of the two organisations and their respective responsibilities and memberships. In this context, EU staff were invited by individual Allies to attend bilateral and multilateral consultations in the framework of the Step 5 – Review Results of the NDPP. In parallel, several EU Member States that are also NATO Allies or Partners invited NATO staff to their CARD bilateral meetings. Moreover, close staff contacts at all levels, including between military staffs, have contributed to ensure mutual awareness of work under way in each organisation. In particular, following the NATO briefing to EU staff on Political Guidance for Defence Planning 2023, NATO staff were briefed on the 2023 Capability Development Priorities and their implementation. Under the single set of forces principle, capabilities developed by members of both organisations, including those developed multinationally, remain in principle available for NATO and EU operations, subject to national political decisions.

Staffs pursued cooperation on ensuring coherence between multinational capability development within EU defence initiatives and multinational High Visibility Projects in NATO. Special emphasis continued to be placed on cooperation on ammunition, particularly in the land and air domains, in

order to support the replenishment of Allies' and Member States' stocks while sustaining support for Ukraine. Regular expert meetings at staff level increased mutual awareness and allowed de-confliction of efforts. Staffs continued to take part in meetings of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group.

In selected areas, such as within NATO Flight Training Europe, deeper engagements have been pursued to further explore and foster complementarity and connectivity.

Progress continued on the implementation of the Military Aviation Strategy according to the respective implementation plans for which the related actions are coordinated through regular dedicated staff meetings. The reciprocal participation in the EDA Single European Sky (SES) Military Aviation Board and NATO Aviation Committee contributed to ensuring coordination and coherence in the framework of aviation, including SES activities.

More specifically, the EU Military Staff and the EDA continued to share awareness on the evolution of the strategic reflection to ensure a free, safe and secure European access to airspace, and the revision of the Air Operations Concept.

Information exchanges between the NATO Airworthiness Advisory Group and the European Military Airworthiness Authority Forum continued through staff representation in reciprocal meetings, and NATO staff provided comments on the European Military Airworthiness Document on Recognition.

Cooperation was pursued on security risks to aviation including cyber risks, within the NATO-EUROCONTROL Air Traffic Management Security Coordinating Group and in the European Aviation Safety Agency's 'European Strategic Coordination Platform'. EDA, EUROCONTROL and NATO staffs continued to collaborate with the overall objective to safeguard military aviation needs and requirements in a European context.

Staff cooperation continued in the framework of the implementation of the respective NATO and EDA Communication, Navigation and Surveillance strategies which have been developed in close coordination, are complementary and aim to ensure resilience and interoperability.

Long-established cooperation and coordination continued on Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) air traffic integration and autonomy. Frequent meetings between EDA and NATO experts took place to ensure mutual awareness and exchange of NATO's operational requirements and EU investment and research and development projects. NATO and EDA staff attended respective bi-annual RPAS expert groups, highlighting opportunities for complementarity in the rapidly expanding area of RPAS, related autonomy and artificial intelligence research and development.

In the maritime domain, staff exchanges focused on underwater unexploded ammunition and the protection of critical undersea infrastructure, with NATO experts participating in the EDA symposium on critical maritime infrastructure protection. In addition, there was significant cross-pollination of capability development efforts, notably the exploitation of emerging and disruptive technologies for enhanced maritime situational awareness (aligning with NATO's Digital Ocean) and the use of autonomous systems to deliver anti-submarine warfare.

Standardisation remains a key area of cooperation to ensure interoperability and complementarity of efforts as well as the awareness of both EU Member States and NATO Allies, recognising the leading role of NATO in military standards through Standardisation Agreements (STANAG). Transparency and coordination were pursued through staff contacts, as well as regular cross-participation in the NATO Committee for Standardisation and the European Defence Standardisation Committee respectively.

Military Mobility remains a flagship of EU-NATO cooperation. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and its implications have underscored the importance to ensure rapid and seamless movement of military forces and materiel. The Structured Dialogue on Military Mobility continued to serve as an effective tool for focused staff discussions on shared priorities and respective work strands, such as military requirements, transport infrastructure, transport of dangerous goods, customs, cross-border movement permissions and relevant exercises, and host nation support.

NATO staff contributed to the EU analysis on long-term infrastructure planning to improve the capacity for large-scale movements on short notice of military forces and to prioritise the main military corridors. Staff talks also continued on Air Traffic Management as well as Communications, Navigation and Surveillance infrastructure in relation to military mobility. Furthermore, NATO staff continued to be invited by the PESCO projects 'Military Mobility' and 'Network of Logistical Hubs in Europe and support to operations' (NetLogHubs) to attend their project coordination meetings. Finally, EU and NATO staff continued to participate in respective Military Mobility-related events to further enhance mutual awareness and understanding.

Defence industries and research

Staffs continued consultations on wider defence industry matters and concrete topics related to industry engagement and support, to ensure mutual awareness and sharing of best practices. These included the continuation of reciprocal presentations on the complementary activities related to industrial production capacity for munitions and initiatives for refilling national stockpiles. The EU High Representative and the EU Commissioner for Internal Market attended the meeting of NATO defence ministers with executives from industry, in the margins of NATO's Defence Ministerial meeting in June 2023, which addressed the need to increase defence industrial capacity, and issuing long-term, predictable contracts to industry, especially for heavy artillery munitions.

Staff coordination continued on the implementation of NATO's Defence Production Action Plan and the establishment of the NATO Defence Industrial Production Board, as well as on the development of the European Defence Industrial Strategy and the European Defence Industry Programme. The EU Commissioner for Internal Market briefed the North Atlantic Council on both proposals in February 2024.

Staff contacts on research and innovation developed further to ensure mutual awareness and identify synergies on respective policy developments and initiatives related to emerging and disruptive technologies and defence innovation, notably the EU Defence Innovation Scheme (EUDIS), the European Innovation Council (EIC) Fund, the Hub for EU Defence Innovation (HEDI) as well as the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) and the NATO Innovation Fund. Exchanges on best practices were pursued with a view to ensuring continued interoperability. The European Commission strengthened the dialogue with the management team of DIANA to reinforce awareness of the ongoing activities of DIANA and the European Defence Fund.

Regular consultations were maintained between the EDA and the NATO Innovation Hub in Allied Command Transformation (ACT) to foster mutual awareness on respective activities and support mutually reinforcing approaches, as well as between the NATO Science and Technology Organization (STO) and EDA, with a focus on space, innovation, Artificial Intelligence, technology watch and foresight activities. STO engaged with the EEAS and the European Commission on science and technology areas of mutual interest such as climate change, energy security, natural resources, emerging and disruptive (technological) challenges, foresight, ethical aspects, research security and resilience. More specifically, STO and the European Commission's Joint Research

Centre (JRC) engaged, among others, on science and technology advice as well as the identification of technological 'weak signals'.

The Centre for Maritime Research and Experimentation (CMRE) of the STO continued its participation in several maritime research projects supported by the Commission, such as PROMENADE, which will develop new technologies related to automatic vessel detection, tracking, and behaviour analysis. EDA's HEDI team participated in the DIANA European Outreach Days in the Netherlands in March 2024.

Exercises

NATO-EU cooperation in the area of exercises contributed to increasing the resilience and preparedness of both organisations and their respective memberships.

After the successful conclusion of the agreed Plan for Implementation of Parallel and Coordinated Exercises (PACE) in the 2022-2023 period, both organisations agreed to extend the PACE concept for the period 2024-2025. The EU is the lead organisation in 2024 with the EU Integrated Resolve 2024 (EU IR24) exercise, and NATO will lead in 2025 with Crisis Management Exercise 2025 (CMX25).

In line with the PACE concept, NATO staff have been invited to participate in pertinent planning stages and will be invited to take part in the conduct phase of EU IR24. Similarly, EU staff from the European Commission, the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU and EEAS will be invited to participate and contribute to the planning, the lead-in and the conduct of CMX25.

In addition, the NATO International Military Staff and the EU Military Staff will hold a number of staff workshops in the military education and training line of efforts, including cooperation during IR24 and CMX25.

Regarding NATO military exercises, the European Commission participated in STEADFAST JUPITER 2023 and STEADFAST JACKAL 2023 and, together with EEAS, has been invited to take part in STEADFAST DETERRENCE 2024. The European Commission, EEAS and EUMS have been invited to participate in STEADFAST DAGGER 2024.

In November 2023, the European Commission's Joint Research Centre and the Vilnius NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence (CoE) organised the table-top exercise Coherent Resilience 2023 – Baltic (CORE23-B) in Riga, focused on maritime and off-shore critical energy infrastructure protection in the Baltic Sea region.

In April 2024, EU staff participated in NATO's Crisis Management Seminar "Tactical tips for Strategic Crisis Management in the hybrid era", sharing perspectives, experiences and best practices on diverse threats emanating from malign actors. The Helsinki Hybrid CoE organised the Dilemma Game and presented an interactive role-play based on an artificial hybrid scenario.

Regular coordination between EDA and the NATO Joint Air Power Competence Centre (JAPCC) continued, including to ensure de-confliction of exercise schedules. Representatives from the JAPCC contributed to the 2023 EDA Helicopter Tactics Symposium.

In the maritime domain, NATO Centre for Maritime Research and Experimentation, NATO Maritime Unmanned Systems Initiative and EDA supported the organisation in March 2024 of the Robotic Experimentation and Prototyping Maritime Unmanned Systems Exercise led by the Portuguese Navy.

Defence and security capacity building

Following Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, partners' demand for and appreciation of defence and security capacity building support has grown exponentially. In response, the two organisations have stepped up their respective efforts in support of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova (hereafter Moldova), Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jordan, Tunisia, and Mauritania. Good governance continued to be an area of cooperation with Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Jordan, and Tunisia through the implementation of the NATO Building Integrity (BI) programme, which benefitted from EU financial support until 31 December 2023. NATO and EU staffs continued their regular consultations on political and security matters affecting these partners and on their respective activities. In December 2023, the two staffs agreed to explore further cooperation opportunities regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jordan, and Moldova.

Looking at country-specific activities:

On Ukraine, NATO and the EU, and their respective members, provided substantial political, military, financial and humanitarian support to Ukraine, and continued to discuss urgent requirements for the provision of additional assistance. Regular exchanges on the respective assistance provided to Ukraine, continued both in Brussels and on the ground, including between the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM), the European Peace Facility, the NATO Representation to Ukraine (NRU). The EU Delegation and the NRU in Kyiv, as well as EUMAM, continued to cooperate closely within the International Advisory Group in support of security sector reform. The transparency of respective efforts as well as opportunities for common approaches continued to be regularly reviewed in the context of the NATO-EU Staff Coordination on Ukraine.

On Moldova, NATO and EU staffs in Brussels and in Chisinau engaged in regular exchanges on the political situation, including through cross-briefings. Consultations focused on resilience, hybrid threats, as well as coordination of delivery of trainings and necessary equipment. Staffs participated in workshops and table-top exercises focused on countering hybrid threats, and strengthening Moldova's energy and cyber security.

On Georgia, staffs regularly engaged in Brussels and Tbilisi on political developments and practical cooperation, including on EU actions under the Security, Accountability and Fight against Crime in Georgia (SAFE) programme, the European Peace Facility, and respective NATO projects under the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP).

On Bosnia and Herzegovina, the quarterly high-level security roundtables in Sarajevo continued. Staffs met regularly to discuss political and security issues and coordinate their activities on cybersecurity, including through the dedicated EU-OSCE-led working group.

On the broader Western Balkans region, regular contacts at all levels and cross-briefings continued. Close coordination, both at the high-level and on the ground between KFOR and EULEX, along with coordinated strategic messages, remained critical to defuse tensions between Belgrade and Pristina.

On Jordan, staffs in Brussels and Amman regularly exchanged views on the political and security situation and on their respective activities, including on counter-terrorism. In June 2023, the resident NATO DCB Border Security Advisor attended the EU Security Operational Reference Group (SORG) with EU Member States' security attachés. Additionally, EU staff participated in the NATO-Jordan co-hosted conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

On Tunisia, NATO and EU staffs continued to exchange information and identify opportunities for cooperation in areas of common interest. Regular staff talks continued in Brussels at expert level, notably to discuss the political developments in Tunisia as well as planned new programmes and

initiatives. Meetings also took place between NATO staffs and EU Delegation in Tunis, including at the level of NATO's Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy and the EU Ambassador to Tunisia in September 2023.

On Mauritania, regular contacts between NATO and EU staffs continued with discussions focused on the political and security situation in the country and the wider region. Staffs explored opportunities for cooperation, including through the NATO Defence and Capacity Building package for Mauritania and with the aim to develop common projects and synergies.

On Iraq, following the evolution of the scope of the NATO Mission Iraq (NMI) in August 2023 to include advisory and capacity-building activities in support of the Federal Police Command and Federal Police-related directorates of the Ministry of Interior, coordination between the EU Advisory Mission and NMI remains close to avoid potential overlaps and mutually reinforce respective efforts. Both Missions actively participate in key international coordination platforms (including the Security Coordination Group). In March 2024, EUAM in coordination with NMI held a six-day workshop in Baghdad for the Ministry of Interior and the Federal Police in risk management and cultural heritage protection first aid in case of a natural disaster or armed conflict.

The annual Staff Talks took place in May 2024, involving more than 60 experts from both organizations. Staffs agreed to continue their regular exchanges and cross-briefings at both HQ and local level. They agreed to enhance coordination and leverage potential synergies in a number of areas in the coming period, including:

- Continue close dialogue and coordination in the area of capacity building through the EU - NATO Staff Coordination on Ukraine and other engagements at staff level;
- Strategic Communications and countering hostile information and disinformation for Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Jordan and Moldova;
- Counter-terrorism capacity building in Jordan and Tunisia;
- Good governance support in Jordan and Tunisia, as well as border security, CBRN training and Small arms and light weapons (SALW) in Jordan;
- Cyber security, military medicine and military English language education in Georgia;
- Developing cooperation and exchanging information on non-lethal material support in the context of de-conflicting activities and building synergies between the European Peace Facility (EPF) and the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative packages in BiH, Jordan, Mauritania and Moldova as well as the EPF and Substantial NATO Georgia Package in Georgia;
- Maritime security, counter-terrorism, SALW, border security, military career transition, education and learning, defence reform, de-mining, and climate change and security in Mauritania.

Political Dialogue

Political dialogue between NATO and the EU at all levels remains indispensable for further strengthening mutual understanding, building confidence, ensuring reciprocal transparency, as well as reinforcing the strong engagement of all EU Member States and NATO Allies. Mutual invitations to relevant high level ministerial meetings, public events, cross-briefings and well-established staff dialogues continued at a high pace. This political dialogue continues to underpin the well-

established cooperation and contributes to further strengthening the EU-NATO strategic partnership.

In the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, dialogue at the highest political level continued, demonstrating unity of purpose and mutual complementarity of efforts. This was exemplified by the participation of the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission to the NATO Summit in Vilnius in July 2023, as well as the participation by the NATO Secretary General in the European Council of June 2023 and in the meeting of the College of Commissioners in November 2023.

Reciprocal participation in respective Ministerial meetings continued on a regular basis. The EU High Representative participated in the meetings of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in June and November 2023, as well as April 2024. He participated in the meeting of NATO Ministers of Defence in February 2024 while the EU also attended the meeting of NATO Ministers of Defence in October 2023. The NATO Secretary General participated in the EU Foreign Affairs Council (Defence) in November 2023 and May 2024, while NATO's Assistant Secretaries General participated in the informal meetings of EU Ministers of Defence in August 2023 and January 2024.

Following the NATO Summit in Vilnius, the NATO Secretary General addressed in September 2023 a joint meeting of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee (AFET) and Sub-Committee on Defence (SEDE). In February 2024, NATO Deputy Secretary General addressed SEDE on developments in the Eastern neighbourhood, the Black Sea and the Western Balkans.

In May 2024, NATO participated in the EU Schuman Security and Defence Forum and attended the EU-Ukraine Defence Industries Forum.

Senior staff level contacts continued apace, including bilateral meetings of members of the College of Commissioners with NATO Principals, as well as regular interactions between the EEAS Secretary General and the NATO Deputy Secretary General. EU senior officials participated in the NATO Defence Policy Directors meetings in December 2023 and April 2024, and NATO Security Policy Directors meetings in October 2023 and February 2024. NATO senior officials participated in the meeting of EU Defence Policy Directors in February 2024 and the meetings of EU Security Policy Directors in October 2023 and April 2024. For the first time, EU representatives participated in meetings of the NATO Resilience Policy Directors in November 2023 and February 2024.

EU and NATO representatives continued to engage with all NATO Allies and EU Member States through mutual cross-briefings. Since the signature of the Warsaw Joint Declaration in July 2016, more than 260 cross-briefings have been held in various EU and NATO committees and working groups. In the reporting period, these included briefings by the EEAS Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General to the North Atlantic Council (NAC) in March 2024 and briefings by the NATO Assistant Secretary General and Deputy Assistant Secretary General to the EU Political and Security Committee (PSC) in July and October 2023, January 2024 and April 2024. The EU Commissioner for Energy participated in the annual meeting on energy security of the NAC in October 2023, while the Commissioner for Internal Market briefed the NAC on EU defence initiatives and on Ukraine in February 2024. In June and November 2023, the EEAS Managing Director for Peace Security and Defence briefed the NATO Deputy Permanent Representatives Committee (DPRC). In addition, NATO's DPRC held an exchange with the EDA Chief Executive in February 2024 on EDA's approach to ammunition procurement in support of Ukraine, and in May 2024 with the EEAS and the Head of EU Delegation in Kyiv on developments in Ukraine.

In addition to reciprocal briefings, the established practice of senior level informal meetings with the participation of non-EU NATO Allies and non-NATO EU Member States was pursued.

Cross-briefings by NATO to the EDA Steering Board and by the EDA and the European Commission to NATO's Conference of National Armaments Directors continued, with a special emphasis on efforts to enable ramp up of defence industry production and initiatives to support Ukraine and refill national stockpiles. NATO Assistant Secretaries General held meetings with the EDA Chief Executive and European Commission Director Generals, respectively.

Several cross-briefings took place in the respective Military Committees in June, September, October, December 2023, and January and March 2024. Topics included climate change and security, cyber security and defence, updates on NATO Political Guidance 2023, the implementation of the Deterrence and Defence agenda, EU Strategic Compass implementation and Defense Critical Infrastructure Program work strands as well as enablement.

Within the framework of the implementation of the common set of proposals, enhanced dialogue between NATO and EU staffs continued, including on military mobility, capability development, counter-terrorism, hybrid threats, resilience, cyber security and defence, arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament, strategic communications and countering disinformation, strategic foresight, and capacity building for partners.

In addition to the existing Structured Dialogues on resilience and military mobility, the two staffs agreed to upgrade the high-level staff talks on Cyber into a Structured Dialogue. In the reporting period, the staffs launched three new Structured Dialogues on:

- i) Space (December 2023), to explore cooperation in areas such as space situational awareness, surveillance and tracking, space standardisation, as well as responsible space behaviours;
- ii) Climate Change, Security and Defence (February 2024), covering inter alia foresight and early warning, adaptation, mitigation, education, training and exercises;
- iii) Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (March 2024), focusing on the overall implementation of the respective work strands and initiatives, including DIANA, the NATO Innovation Fund, EUDIS and HEDI.

Dialogue between the NATO and EU military staffs continued, including cross-participation of each organisation's Senior Military Authorities in respective Chiefs of Defence meetings. Reciprocating the briefing by the Chair of the NATO Military Committee to the EU Military Committee in Chiefs of Defence format on NATO's approach towards support to Ukraine in May 2023, the Chairman of the European Union Military Committee attended the NATO Military Committee in Chiefs of Defence Session in January 2024.

Two bi-annual NATO and EU military staff Directors' General conferences were held in June and December 2023. The Directors General monitored and reported to their respective Military Committees on the implementation of the military-related common proposals as well as on the state of play of staff interactions. Furthermore, an informal game plan was continually updated to monitor the state of play between the two staffs on mutually identified objectives and milestones within designated lines of development.

Staff engagement on issues related to Women, Peace and Security (WPS) continued. In October 2023, the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative (SGSR) for WPS and the EU Ambassador for Gender and Diversity participated in an international roundtable on women's leadership held in Madrid to celebrate the 35th anniversary of women in the Armed Forces of Spain. The SGSR and the EU Ambassador took the opportunity to highlight cooperation between EU and NATO on WPS through their public messaging.

The EU Ambassador for Gender and Diversity attended the 2023 NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives Conference. Furthermore, the EEAS participated in the first meeting of Allied Envoys for Gender Equality, Women, Peace and Security and Feminist Foreign Policy, convened by the

NATO SGSR for WPS in January 2024. The NATO SGSR participated in the EU's public campaign for International Women's Day 2024.

In the fall of 2023, the NATO International Military Staff (IMS) and EU Military Staff (EUMS) Gender Advisors collaborated on a Food for thought paper on disinformation and the gender perspective. They also attended the IMS-EUMS Directors' General Conference in December 2023. In March 2024, the IMS and EUMS Gender Advisors took part in a panel discussion at a seminar on the occasion of the 24 Years of the WPS Agenda, co-organised by the Belgian Royal Higher Institute for Defence and the Centre for Security and Defence Studies.

EU and NATO staffs remain firmly committed to taking this cooperation forward in a pragmatic, fully coordinated and coherent way with a view to delivering further concrete results across the entire spectrum of our robust cooperation agenda.