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From Codification to Operations

The 11th World Forum on Codification was held in Bruges on 9th and 10th November.

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The NATO member countries and numerous international partners attended the Forum to consider the challenges to be met during the coming decade. But what does "codification" mean? A word of explanation...



After the Second World War, the United States adopted a method of codifying their operational equipment. Each item of supply was given a reference number. A half a century later, that system has come a long way. The *NATO Stock Number* (NSN) is now used not only by the 28 NATO member states but also by 36 other nations, i.e. – in total – a third of the world's countries.

The NSN is used at every stage in the life cycle of an item, from procurement to phase-out. Every NSN points to a wealth of information about an item, such as manufacturer identification, technical characteristics and performance data.

Codification enables deployed armed forces to order precisely what is required for the performance of their missions. "It is a means of stating our requirements while avoiding wasting time" explained Major Vanden Dries, the Director of the Belgian Defense Centre for Materiel Identification and Documentation.

The Directors of the National Codification Bureaux meet every year to coordinate their work and consider further system developments.

In Bruges, they discussed partnerships between civil industry and defence agencies and the implications of using an effective reference method in deployed operations.

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