



Eighth 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

NATO and the EU continue to be faced with the gravest threat to Euro-Atlantic security in decades. Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine violates international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter, and gravely undermines European and international peace and stability.

As highlighted in the two Organizations' respective strategic documents adopted in 2022, the EU's Strategic Compass and NATO's Strategic Concept, this is a key juncture for Euro-Atlantic security, more than ever demonstrating the importance of transatlantic unity, calling for closer NATO-EU cooperation. Both documents provide ambitious political guidance from EU Member States and NATO Allies to take our strategic partnership to the next level.

The third Joint Declaration on NATO-EU cooperation signed on 10 January 2023 by the Secretary General of NATO, the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission sends a strong message of transatlantic unity and resolve. Building on the said two strategic documents as well as the 2016 and 2018 Joint Declarations, the third Joint Declaration reaffirms our unwavering commitment to further strengthen cooperation in existing areas, and to expand and deepen it to address in particular the growing geostrategic competition, resilience issues, protection of critical infrastructures, emerging and disruptive technologies, space, the security implications of climate change, and countering foreign information manipulation and interference.

In this new geostrategic context, the EU and NATO are playing 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, eighth report on the implementation of the 74 common proposals – endorsed by the EU and NATO Councils in parallel processes in 2016 and 2017 – elaborates on progress achieved between June 2022 and May 2023 by demonstrating tangible deliverables across the entire spectrum of our cooperation agenda, underpinned by our continued robust political dialogue.

We wish to highlight in particular the following elements:

- Ensuring unity, coherence and complementarity of efforts in responding to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and in particular in supporting Ukraine's inherent right to self-defence, has been a key priority throughout the reporting period. Regular contacts between senior officials, cross-participation in respective high-level meetings and staff consultations at all levels have further intensified on the implications of the war including through the establishment of the dedicated NATO-EU Staff Coordination on Ukraine bringing together experts of both organisations for regular and structured exchanges. Following a trilateral meeting between the EU High Representative/Vice-President, the NATO Secretary General and the Ukrainian Foreign Minister in February 2023, the two staffs have been looking into leveraging respective strengths to support ammunition procurement for Ukraine. Staffs are also exchanging information on relevant initiatives to scale up defence industrial production.
- Cooperation continued to expand through the EU-NATO Structured Dialogue on Resilience launched in 2022. In this framework and in response to the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines, the NATO Secretary General and the President of the European Commission established a Task Force on the resilience of critical infrastructure at staff level, with a view to sharing situational awareness and best practices, and developing principles and recommendations to improve our collective resilience.
- The two organizations have stepped up their efforts and close interaction in the field of crisis management exercises, notably through the successful conclusion of the agreed Plan for Implementation of Parallel and Coordinated Exercises (PACE) in the period of 2022-2023, as well as through cross-participation in various military and tabletop exercises.
- Cross-participation in high-level meetings with partners as well as respective partnership events and workshops intensified. In addition, staffs further strengthened coordination on security and defence capacity building for partner countries, notably Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tunisia, Jordan, and Mauritania. In this respect, they extensively consulted each other when designing their respective support measures under NATO's Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative (DCB) and the EU's European Peace Facility (EPF).

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, as underscored in both the EU Strategic Compass and the NATO Strategic Concept as well as the third Joint Declaration, the two staffs remain firmly committed to further strengthen, deepen and expand our mutually beneficial cooperation by exploring avenues for further collaboration across all existing work strands, as well as in new areas such as climate and defence, space, and new technologies.

Countering Hybrid Threats

Staff interactions on countering hybrid threats continued through well-established channels, including the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki (Hybrid CoE). To date, a total of 33 NATO Allies and EU Member States have joined the Centre. Both staffs participated in its Steering Board meetings and in the third High-Level Retreat, held in October 2022. In the same month, the Hybrid CoE facilitated a scenario-based discussion on hybrid threats from Russia and China and possible EU and NATO responses. The Hybrid CoE also hosted the pilot course on “The Contribution of Cyber in Hybrid Conflict”, organized by the European Defence Agency (EDA) with the support and participation of the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence.

Well-established contacts between the NATO Joint Intelligence and Security Division Hybrid Analysis Branch and the EU INTCEN Hybrid Fusion Cell further developed, with the aim of strengthening situational awareness and mutual understanding of respective activities. The two staffs continued preparing Parallel and Coordinated Assessments on various topics, including Russia’s hybrid strategy.

Cooperation in the area of counter-terrorism proceeded at a steady pace. Regular staff talks served to exchange views on topics such as battlefield evidence, technical exploitation, partner capacity building, countering unmanned aerial systems, new technologies, countering terrorist financing, and human security aspects of counter-terrorism. EU staff participated in the NATO Countering Unmanned Aircraft Systems (C-UAS) working group in February 2023. Both staffs participated in the Counter Unmanned Aircraft Systems Technology Europe Conference, hosted by UK in April 2023. In December 2022, the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU hosted an informal seminar focusing on chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear challenges in counter-terrorism, with the participation of representatives from NATO Allies and EU Member States, as well as of NATO and EU staffs. In May 2023, the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU hosted a similar seminar on Unmanned Aerial Systems Challenges in Countering Terrorism.

Staff-to-staff interaction and cooperation on resilience have increased considerably, as a result of the new level of ambition in this area but also due to Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. Since 2022, the Structured Dialogue on Resilience has become the main staff mechanism to exchange information, identify synergies, and ensure coherence between relevant EU and NATO work strands. Under the Structured Dialogue, a new Task Force on the Resilience of Critical Infrastructure was launched in March 2023, focusing on resilience in four sectors: energy, transport, digital infrastructure and space.

Staffs advanced their work on enhancing the complementarity of respective resilience-related processes, especially between the EU’s Critical Entities Resilience Directive, the EU’s Disaster Resilience Goals and the relevant parts of NATO’s resilience planning and review process. They continued coordination across a number of relevant key areas, including: civil preparedness and protection; mass casualty incidents and health preparedness; uncontrolled population movement; cooperation on resilience with common partner countries; and complementarity between

resilience-related tools and instruments that exist within the two organizations. Interactions and information exchange continued through EU staff participation in the NATO Resilience Symposium and in two meetings of NATO's Resilience Committee with partners in June and December 2022, and with a NATO staff briefing on NATO's resilience policy developments to a joint meeting of the EU's Politico-Military Group and the Horizontal Working Party on Enhancing Resilience and Countering Hybrid Threats in March 2023. Building on previous exchanges, EU staff debriefed the NATO Joint Health Group.

Cooperation on Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) defence and resilience issues continued. Dedicated staff talks on CBRN defence took place in September 2022 focusing on: capacity-building activities for partners for CBRN defence and resilience; the implementation of NATO's new CBRN Defence Policy; and CBRN implications of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine. NATO's Joint CBRN Defence Centre of Excellence (JCBRN Defence CoE) cooperated with the EU on training and capacity-building activities for CBRN defence, including training for CBRN Consequence Management and various aspects of emergency response. The JCBRN Defence CoE also supported the activities of the EU's CBRN Risk Mitigation Centre of Excellence Initiative, which works to build the resilience of a wide network of partners around the world.

On Strategic Communications, the two staffs consistently exchanged real-time insights, analysis, respective products and communication plans, and reports on foreign information manipulation and interference, including disinformation, building a common culture of cooperation in strategic communications.

They worked hand-in-hand to maintain shared situational awareness of hostile activities in the information environment, including through analyst exchanges, the EEAS-led Rapid Alert System and the Commission's Network against Disinformation, with a particular focus on Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine and on China's activities providing political support to Russia and amplification of Russian messaging.

In February 2023, NATO's Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy addressed the EEAS high-level conference 'Beyond Disinformation: EU Responses to the Threat of Foreign Information Manipulation'. In April 2023, EEAS staff briefed at the NATO Information Environment Assessment Tiger Team conference in Spain. EU staff took part in the Workshop on Disinformation organized by NATO's Science and Technology Organization. Staffs from both organizations participated in the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) and attended the G7 RRM Focal Points Meeting in Ottawa in March 2023.

NATO and EU staff cooperation with the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Latvia (StratCom CoE) remained strong. In fall 2022 and spring 2023, both staffs facilitated the involvement of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia in the Countering Disinformation War Game organized by the Hybrid CoE and StratCom CoE, which aimed to support partner countries' strategic communications capabilities. EU and NATO staffs continued to coordinate public communications related to areas of common interest, in particular surrounding the signature of the third Joint Declaration in January 2023, and the joint visits by the Secretary General of NATO and the President of the European Commission to Estonia and Norway in February and March 2023 respectively.

Operational cooperation including maritime issues

Staff dialogue on operational cooperation and the practice of mutual cross-briefings in respective NATO and EU Committees continued on a regular basis. In March 2023, the EU briefed the NATO Operations Committee on the EU Advisory Mission in Iraq, whereas in May, NATO provided a briefing to the EU Politico-Military Group on current operations.

In November 2022, NATO staff participated in the Shared Awareness and De-confliction in the Mediterranean (SHADE MED) Conference hosted by Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI.

In March 2023, the EU hosted the annual staff talks on maritime activities, covering among others Unexploded Ordnances at Sea with presentations by the NATO Centre for Maritime Research and Experimentation and NATO Naval Mine Warfare Centre of Excellence.

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

NATO and the EU have continued to lead the aviation normalization process in the Western Balkans, with some technical progress.

Cyber security and defence

Staffs maintained regular contact at all levels and information exchanges on respective cyber activities, including policy developments. This included close engagement when NATO and the EU publicly expressed solidarity with Albania following malicious cyber activities targeting their critical infrastructure and the delivery of public services on 8 September 2022, strongly condemning such unacceptable behaviour in cyberspace.

Following relevant cyber related decisions taken at the NATO 2022 Madrid Summit, and the adoption of the Joint Communication on the EU Policy on Cyber Defence, EU staff and NATO counterparts have been engaging to ensure coherence and identify potential synergies.

In light of Russia's continued war of aggression against Ukraine, including potential spill-over effects on NATO Allies and EU Member States, and the challenges that geostrategic competition presents for the rules-based international order, staff exchanges focused on developing a shared understanding of the cyber threat environment. Another focus has been to enhance exchanges on strategic, policy and legislative cyber security and defence developments to achieve shared situational awareness and promote further complementarities.

In addition, staffs consulted on ongoing and planned efforts by the two organisations and their respective constituencies to support Ukraine in the cyber domain, as well as regarding cyber capacity building to partners.

They continued to provide relevant updates and engage on respective cyber crisis management and response mechanisms, including in the framework of ongoing efforts on military mobility.

In terms of leveraging synergies for situational awareness and co-ordinating efforts as part of promoting and upholding responsible state behaviour in cyberspace, EU staff participated in the NATO Cyber Defence Committee meeting dedicated to the UN framework for responsible state behaviour in February 2023.

Regarding cyber exercises, NATO staff observed sections of the annual Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox tabletop exercise (CyDipTTX 2022) in the Council Horizontal Working Party on Cyber Issues in November 2022. EU staff participated in the NATO exercise Cyber Coalition 22 organised by NATO Allied Command Transformation, and in the international cyber defence exercise Locked Shields, organised by the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE).

Exchanges between staffs continued on concepts and doctrines as well as training and education, including between the EU Military Staff (EUMS) and NATO International Military Staff (IMS).

NATO's CCDCOE invited EU staff to take part in the annual International Conference on Cyber Conflict in June 2022. The European Defence Agency (EDA) participated in the NATO Annual Discipline Conference in September 2022 and provided an update to Allies on EDA Cyber activities. Cooperation between the EDA and NATO CCDCOE continued, including through invitations to NATO to attend the EDA Project Team Cyber Defence meetings.

The Technical Arrangement on Cyber Defence between the NATO Computer Incident Response Capability (NCIRC) and the Computer Emergency Response Team for the EU institutions, bodies and agencies (CERT-EU) continued to be implemented in line with existing provisions. The Malware Information Sharing Platform (MISP) is being leveraged to this end. Regular coordination and exchanges on best practices as well as reports between staffs, continued.

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 recognizing the different nature of the two organizations and their respective responsibilities and memberships. Furthermore, EU staff were consulted during the development of the NATO Defence Planning and Capability Survey (DPCS). The DPCS was also used to inform the EU Military Capability Questionnaire. Moreover, close staff contacts at all levels, including between military staffs, have contributed to ensure mutual awareness of work under way in each organization. In particular, EU staff were briefed on Political Guidance for Defence Planning 2023. Under the single set of forces principle, capabilities developed by members of both organizations, including those developed multinationally, remain in principle available for NATO and EU operations, subject to national political decisions.

Staffs worked together to foster coherence in the context of multinational capability development within the EU defence initiatives and the multinational High Visibility Projects in NATO respectively. Cooperation on munitions – in the land and air domain particularly – has taken a special focus in the past year to sustain support to Ukraine and replenish Member States' and Allies' stocks. Overall, expert meetings at staff level continued to ensure awareness, complementarity of efforts and avoidance of unnecessary duplication downstream as regards respective multinational projects and programmes. The highlight of cooperation was the declaration of initial operational capability of the Multinational Multi-Role Tanker Transport fleet in March 2023.

Progress continued on the implementation of the Military Aviation Strategy according to the respective implementation plans for which the related actions are coordinated through dedicated regular 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 EEAS and EDA updated the NATO Aviation Committee in December 2022 on the development of a Strategic Reflection “to ensure a free, safe and secure European access to the airspace” stemming from the EU Strategic Compass. On airworthiness, information exchanges between the NATO Airworthiness Advisory Group and the European Military Airworthiness Authority Forum continued through staff representation in mutual meetings, and NATO staff were invited to provide comments on the European Military Airworthiness Document on Recognition. Finally, coordination between staffs continued to support nations in a consistent and complementary manner in the context of the modernisation of communications, navigation and surveillance systems.

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

Long-established cooperation and coordination on Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) Air Traffic Integration, and directly related RPAS autonomy continued. Frequent staff-level meetings between EDA and NATO subject matter 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 each other's respective bi-annual RPAS expert groups, highlighting complementary opportunities in the rapidly expanding capability area of RPAS, related autonomy and artificial intelligence research and development.

In the maritime domain, staff exchanges focused on underwater unexploded munitions 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 Project) and the use of autonomous systems to deliver anti-submarine warfare.

Standardisation remains an important area of cooperation to ensure the awareness of both EU Member States and NATO Allies and respective and complementary efforts in this area, recognizing the importance of NATO's 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 and a high priority for both organisations in light of the new security environment which highlighted the need to do more in this area. The Structured Dialogue on Military Mobility continued to serve as an effective format for focused staff discussions on shared priorities, such as military requirements, transport infrastructure, transport of dangerous goods, customs, cross border movement permissions and relevant exercises, as well as mutual updates on respective work.

In this context, staffs discussed the new opportunities for cooperation in light of the new EU Action Plan on Military Mobility 2.0, adopted by the Commission and High Representative on 10 November 2022. Also in the framework of the Structured Dialogue, dedicated expert-level discussions between staffs took place in October 2022 and January 2023 on the respective policies and activities to enhance the cybersecurity and resilience of relevant transport infrastructure. In addition, NATO staff have contributed to the update of the EU's Military Requirements, including for the fuel supply chain, Air Traffic Management and Communication Navigation and Surveillance infrastructure. Finally, NATO staff was invited by the PESCO project Military Mobility as well as the project Network of Logistical Hubs in Europe and support to operations (NetLogHubs) to attend their project coordination meetings.

Defence industry and research

Staffs continued consultations on wider industry matters and concrete topics related to industry engagement, to ensure mutual awareness and sharing of best practices. These included reciprocal presentations on the complementary activities related to industrial production capacity for munitions and initiatives for refilling national stockpiles, including the briefing by the EU Commissioner for Internal Market to the North Atlantic Council in December 2022. It also included updates on events on and with industry, organized by the EU and NATO, such as the participation of the General Manager of the NATO Support and Procurement Agency in EDA's Annual Conference in December 2022 to provide NATO's view on joint capability development in a European context, and the preparations for the NATO-Industry Forum, which will take place in Sweden in October 2023.

Staff contacts on research and innovation developed to ensure mutual awareness on respective policy developments and initiatives related to emerging and disruptive technologies and defence innovation, notably the EU Defence Innovation Scheme (EUDIS), the Hub for EU Defence Innovation (HEDI) as well as NATO's Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) and the NATO Innovation Fund, also with a view to identifying synergies. This included the sharing of best practices, taking into account issues such as interoperability of future solutions with existing ones. Regular consultations were maintained between EDA and the NATO Innovation Hub in Allied Command Transformation (ACT) to foster mutual awareness on respective activities and support mutually reinforcing approaches, and between the NATO Science and Technology Organization (STO) and EDA, with a focus on space, innovation, Artificial Intelligence, technology watch and foresight activities. STO also engaged with the EEAS and the Commission on science and technology areas of

mutual interest such as climate change, energy security, natural resources, emerging and disruptive (technological) challenges, and ethical aspects. 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. NATO representatives participated in the Defence Innovation Days organised by EDA in May 2023.

Exercises

In the new geostrategic environment, NATO-EU cooperation on exercises contributes to increasing the resilience and preparedness of both organizations and their respective memberships.

In the reporting period, the EU and NATO pursued the implementation of the Parallel and Coordinated Exercises (PACE) concept in line with the PACE Plan for 2022-2023.

During 2022, NATO staff participated in the relevant planning and conduct phases of the EU Integrated Resolve Exercise (PACE22). The exercise resulted in extensive staff interaction on crisis management in a hybrid threat environment. A NATO liaison presence was established in the EU premises to facilitate exchanges. During the exercise, a senior NATO official took part in an Integrated Political Crisis Response roundtable and briefed on NATO's response to the crisis scenario.

Staffs from the European Commission, the Council of the European Union and the European External Action Service, participated in the planning and conduct of NATO's Crisis Management Exercise 2023 (PACE23). EU staff contributed to the exercise planning conferences. During the conduct phase, an EU Response Cell supported the exercise by providing possible reactions to the scenario from the EU institutions, also facilitating exchanges between staffs. A senior EEAS official briefed the North Atlantic Council on the EU response to the crisis scenario.

In addition, the NATO International Military Staff (IMS) and the EU Military Staff (EUMS) held a number of staff-level workshops on crisis management, in the context of PACE22 and PACE23 in October and November 2022 as well as March 2023, with a fourth one planned for October 2023.

Regarding NATO military exercises, the European Commission participated in the STEADFAST JACKAL 2023 exercise, and the Commission and FRONTEX in STEADFAST JUPITER 2023. EUMS and EEAS participated in the NATO's annual Coalition Warrior Interoperability eXploration, eXperimentation, eXamination, eXercise (CWIX) in June 2022, and have been invited to take part in CWIX 2023 that will be conducted in June 2023.

The European Commission's Joint Research Centre and the NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence (ENSECCOE) in Vilnius have been planning and organising the tabletop exercise Coherent Resilience 2023 – Baltic (CORE23-B), focused on maritime and off-shore critical energy infrastructure protection in the Baltic Sea region, with the conduct phase scheduled in November 2023 in Riga.

Representatives from NATO Joint Air Power Competence Centre and NATO Flight Training Europe contributed to the 2022 EDA Helicopter Tactics Symposium. Regular coordination between EDA and the NATO Joint Air Power Competence Centre continued to take place, including to ensure de-confliction of exercise schedules.

Defence and security capacity building

Cooperation on defence and security capacity building continues to prove very important for partner countries as well as for Euro-Atlantic security, in particular in the wake of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. In this regard, the two organizations have stepped up their efforts in support of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jordan, Tunisia and Mauritania. Staffs in Brussels and on the ground continued to regularly exchange information on the political and security situation in all the aforementioned partner countries, and on the respective activities of both organizations.

Staffs extensively consulted each other when designing their new defence capacity building packages: this included NATO's tailored support measures for Moldova, Georgia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EU's assistance measures under the European Peace Facility for Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Jordan. Good governance continued to be an area of cooperation with Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Jordan, and Tunisia through the implementation of EU's supported NATO Building Integrity (BI) programme.

Looking at country-specific activities:

NATO and EU staffs intensified interaction on Ukraine, including through dedicated staff dialogues on relevant aspects of respective responses to the invasion. The EU Delegation and the NATO Liaison Office in Kyiv, as well as the EU Advisory Mission in Ukraine, continued to cooperate closely within the International Advisory Group in support of security sector reform (SSR). Other established frameworks of cooperation in support of Ukraine's security and defence sector reform were temporarily suspended due to Russia's war of aggression. The EU also participated in the donor coordination on cybersecurity organised by NATO together with Ukrainian interlocutors. The NATO Liaison Office and the EU Delegation in Ukraine continued working relations on the ground in April 2023 after NATO's return to physical presence.

With regard to Moldova, staffs in Brussels and in Chisinau continued regular exchanges and updates on the political situation, including through respective cross-briefings. Staff-to-staff consultations intensified on respective practical support to Moldova, for example on resilience and hybrid threats, including through NATO's Resilience Advisory Support Team (RAST) and the EU Partnership Mission in Moldova (EUPM). NATO participated in the EU Security Policy Directors' informal meeting held in Chisinau in April 2023 to discuss the coordination of support provided to Moldova.

On Georgia, staffs held their regular meetings in Brussels and Tbilisi, including on EU actions under the SAFE (Security, Accountability and Fight against Crime in Georgia) programme and respective NATO projects under the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP). Cross-briefings on Georgia (and on Moldova) to relevant EU and NATO committees took place in September 2022, and the EU Special Representative

for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia briefed NATO Deputies Committee in April 2023.

In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), staffs pursued their bi-monthly high-level security roundtables in Sarajevo. They met regularly to exchange views and information about political-military topics and coordinated their activities on cybersecurity through the dedicated EU/OSCE-led working group.

With regard to the broader Western Balkans region, regular contacts at all levels and cross-briefings took place in order to enhance situational awareness and mutual understanding of respective activities. Close coordination, both at the high-level and on the ground between KFOR and EULEX, along with coordinated strategic messages, proved highly effective in defusing tensions between Belgrade and Pristina in 2022.

On Jordan, staffs regularly exchanged views on the political and security situation and on the respective activities, including on counter-terrorism (CT). In November 2022, the EU Delegation in Amman participated in NATO's CT capacity building exercise with the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) and presented the EU's CT Strategy. In May 2023, EU staff attended NATO-JAF Maritime Security Workshop in Aqaba.

As for Tunisia, staffs had regular contacts to discuss new programmes and initiatives such as CT cooperation, including in the maritime domain. Meetings also took place in Tunis between NATO staff and the EU Delegation.

Regarding the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region as a whole, discussions took place at various levels. EU staff participated in NATO's informal Mediterranean Dialogue Policy Advisory Group meeting in Alicante in October 2022. NATO hosted EU representatives from the Strategic Communications Task Force South to present EU actions in the region and potential synergies in this area. NATO staff was involved in a series of meetings at the EU on the topic of hostile information activities in the MENA region. Ahead of the January 2023 regular staff talks on CT, two thematic working sessions were organised by the EEAS, and addressed inter alia capacity building efforts in Jordan and Tunisia.

As for Mauritania, regular contacts took place in Brussels, following up on initial meetings between NATO staff and the EU Delegation in Nouakchott in 2022 and 2023. Discussions focused on the political and security situation in the country and the wider region, particularly in view of Mauritania's presidency of the G5 Sahel, as well as on exploring opportunities for cooperation, including through the NATO Defence and Capacity Building package for Mauritania.

Cross-briefings took place in May 2023 to update respective committees on the progress made in this area of cooperation. The EU briefed the NATO meeting of National Points of Contact for the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) Initiative, as well as the NATO BI Conference, which both took place in December 2022.

The annual staff-to-staff talks took place in May 2023, involving more than 80 experts from both organizations. Looking ahead, staffs agreed to continue their regular exchanges, including on their respective assistance in order to avoid duplication of assistance provided, leverage synergies and ensure complementarity of efforts. Staffs

also agreed to explore further cooperation in a number of areas in the coming period, including:

- Strategic communications for Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Jordan;
- Counter-terrorism and good governance for Jordan and Tunisia, as well as border security, firearms and CBRN for Jordan;
- Military medicine for Georgia and Mauritania; and education and training for Mauritania;
- Cyber security and wider security and defence sector for Moldova;
- A potential coordination mechanism for synchronization of the support provided to Moldova by NATO, EU, individual Allies and Member States, and other donors.

As for Ukraine, the EU and NATO will continue to work hand in hand and explore how to further deepen dialogue and undertake initiatives in the area of capacity building through the EU - NATO Staff Coordination on Ukraine.

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 further intensified.

NATO and EU staffs' enhanced dialogue within the framework of the implementation of the common set of proposals continued at a regular pace, 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 information manipulation and interference, including disinformation, strategic foresight, and capacity building for partners. Building on the EU Strategic Compass and NATO Strategic Concept, staffs have been exploring avenues for further collaboration across all existing work strands as well as on new areas such as climate and defence, space, and new technologies.

Political dialogue significantly intensified in the context of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, clearly demonstrating unity of purpose and mutual complementarity of efforts. At the highest level, the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission took part in the NATO Summit in Madrid in June 2022. In January 2023, the Secretary General of NATO, the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission signed a third Joint Declaration on NATO-EU cooperation.

Reciprocal participation in respective Ministerial meetings continued unabated. The EU High Representative participated in the meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in April 2023 as well as NATO Ministers of Defence in October 2022 and February 2023, while the EEAS Deputy Secretary General for Peace, Security and Defence attended the meeting of NATO Ministers of Defence in June 2022 and the meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs in November 2022. The NATO Secretary General participated in the EU Foreign Affairs Council (Defence) in November 2022 and May 2023 and attended the informal meeting of EU Ministers of Defence in March

2023, while the NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General participated in the informal meeting of EU Ministers of Defence in August 2022.

In July 2022, the NATO Secretary General addressed the joint meeting of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee (AFET) and Sub-Committee on Defence (SEDE), in association with the European Parliament's Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO. In October 2022, the NATO Deputy Secretary General participated in the European Commission's Annual EU Budget Conference. In January 2023, a NATO representative briefed SEDE on KFOR activities. In February 2023, the Executive Vice President of the European Commission for the European Green Deal took part in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly Joint Committees' meeting.

In January 2023, for the first time ever, the NATO Secretary General took part in the annual retreat of the College of Commissioners. In February, the President of the European Commission and the NATO Secretary General jointly visited Estonia on the occasion of its independence day and the anniversary of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. In March, the NATO Deputy Secretary General participated in the first EU Schuman Security and Defence Forum.

In the context of stepping up cooperation on the protection of critical infrastructure, the NATO Secretary General and the President of the European Commission – together with the Norwegian Prime Minister – visited in March 2023 the Troll Offshore Platform in Norway.

Senior level contacts, 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, continued apace. EU senior officials took part in the meetings of NATO Defence Policy Directors in December 2022 and April 2023, and of NATO Security Policy Directors in November 2022 and March 2023. In turn, NATO senior officials participated in the meetings of EU Defence Policy Directors in August 2022 and February 2023 as well as of EU Security Policy Directors in September 2022 and April 2023.

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 210 cross-briefings were held in respective 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 April 2023 and briefings by the NATO Deputy Secretary General, Assistant Secretary General and Deputy Assistant Secretary General to the EU Political and Security Committee (PSC) in July 2022, October 2022, December 2022 and April 2023. The NAC was also briefed on food security by the Secretary General of the European Commission in June 2022 as well as on EU defence initiatives and Ukraine by the EU Commissioner for Internal Market in December 2022.

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 the Conference of National Armaments Directors respectively continued to take place. NATO Assistant Secretaries General held

meetings with the EDA Chief Executive and European Commission Directors General, respectively.

Several cross-briefings took place in the respective Military Committees in June, September and December 2022, and March and April 2023. Topics included NATO's Strategic Concept and the EU's Strategic Compass, updates on current missions and operations, as well as presentations on Strategic Communications focusing on information manipulation and interference, including disinformation.

Dialogue between the NATO International Military Staff (IMS) and the EU Military Staff (EUMS), including cross-invitations for the participation of each organization's Senior Military Authorities in respective Chiefs of Defence meetings, was further enhanced. In September 2022, the Chair of the NATO Military Committee and the Chairman of the European Union Military Committee participated in a joint panel at the 18th Common Security and Defence Policy High Level Course on EU-NATO cooperation. In November 2022 and May 2023, EU senior military staff took part in the NATO Bi-Annual Partners meetings. Two bi-annual NATO and EU military staff Directors General conferences were held in June and November 2022. 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.

Engagement between staffs on issues related to Women, Peace and Security (WPS) continued on a regular basis. In March 2023, the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative on WPS and the EU Ambassador for Gender and Diversity addressed an expert seminar on integrating a gender perspective into EU Common Security and Defence Policy Missions and Operations. At a meeting in October 2022 under the Regional Acceleration of Resolution 1325 umbrella in the margins of the UN Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, staffs agreed for a follow-up thematic exchange on gender disinformation in the course of 2023.

The Joint EUMS-NATO IMS Gender Perspective Roadmap, outlining cooperation on Women, Peace and Security, has been implemented since June 2022. In July 2022, NATO IMS gave a presentation at the meeting of the EU Missions and Operations Gender Monitoring Team. Respective teams exchanged experiences on integrating a gender perspective in military exercises as well as on gender, climate and security.

In April 2023, the EUMS-IMS Gender Points of Contact pursued their dialogue on Gender and Human Security, including on gender perspectives in the Children in Armed Conflict agenda in the context of the military operations.

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