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DEFENCE CAPABILITIES INITIATIVE

Introduction

1. At Washington, NATO Heads of State and Government launched a Defence Capabilities Initiative. The objective of this initiative is to improve defence capabilities to ensure the effectiveness of future multinational operations across the full spectrum of Alliance missions in the present and foreseeable security environment with a special focus on improving interoperability among Alliance forces, and where applicable also between Alliance and Partner forces.

The Challenge: Adapting Capabilities for a New Security Environment

2. In accordance with the Alliance's new Strategic Concept, NATO must continue to maintain capabilities to deal with large-scale aggression against one or more of the members, although the probability of this occurring in the foreseeable future is low. Warning times for the possible emergence of such a threat are likely to remain long. Potential threats to Alliance security are more likely to result from regional conflicts, ethnic strife or other crises beyond Alliance territory, as well as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

3. Future Alliance military operations, including non-Article 5 crisis response operations, are likely to be smaller in scale than those which were the basis for Alliance planning during the Cold War. They may also be longer in duration, extend multinational cooperation to lower levels and take place concurrently with other Alliance operations. In many cases non-Article 5 operations will include force contributions from Partners and possibly other non-Allied nations. Operations outside Alliance territory may need to be undertaken with no, or only limited, access to existing NATO infrastructure. It may not be possible to invoke existing national emergency legislation to provide civilian transport assets for deployments or to mobilise reserves. These developments will make new demands on the capabilities required of Alliance forces, in particular in the field of interoperability. It is important that all nations are able to

make a fair contribution to the full spectrum of Alliance missions regardless of differences in national defence structures.

4. Significant progress has been made in recent years in adapting Alliance forces to the requirements of this new security environment. However, many Allies have only relatively limited capabilities for the rapid deployment of significant forces outside national territory, or for extended sustainment of operations and protection of forces far from home bases. Command and control and information systems need to be better matched to the requirements of future Alliance military operations which will entail the exchange of a much greater volume of information and extending to lower levels than in the past. Maintaining the effectiveness of multinational operations will require particular attention to the challenges of interoperability. In this context, increased attention must be paid to human factors (such as common approaches to doctrine, training and operational procedures) and standardisation, as well as to the challenges posed by the accelerating pace of technological change and the different speeds at which Allies introduce advanced capabilities. Improvements in interoperability and critical capabilities should also strengthen the European pillar in NATO.

The Way Ahead

5. Against this background, the Alliance has examined areas where improvements in capabilities would make a significant contribution towards meeting the challenges of the future. The aim has been to develop a common assessment of requirements for the full range of Alliance missions. In identifying the most important areas for improvement, and with a special focus on interoperability, the work has concentrated on the deployability and mobility of Alliance forces, on their sustainability and logistics, their survivability and effective engagement capability, and on command and control and information systems. In some cases it has been possible at this early stage to set out the steps to be taken to improve some capabilities. In others, further work is required to examine different options and make firm recommendations about improvements to be made. The initiative emphasises the importance of the resource dimension of this work as well as the requirement for better coordination between defence planning disciplines; takes into consideration the ability of European Allies to undertake WEU-led operations; addresses ways to improve capabilities of multinational formations; and considers issues such as training, doctrine, human factors, concept development and experimentation, and standardisation.

6. As part of this Defence Capabilities Initiative, Heads of State and Government have established a temporary High Level Steering Group (HLSG) to oversee the implementation of the DCI and to meet the requirement of coordination and harmonisation among relevant planning disciplines including for Allies concerned force planning, and with NATO standardisation, with the aim of achieving lasting effects on improvements in capabilities and interoperability.