

Colloquy on Space, Defence and Security

Presentation by Michel Praet, head of the DG's Cabinet of ESA in Brussels

Kourou, 19th September 2006

Presidents,
Director Generals,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Jean-Luc Dehaene as quoted by Agence Europe recently declared :

« I have never heard any criticism towards the reinforcement of Europe where Foreign policy or defence is concerned”.

The same goes for us; we have never heard criticism towards the reinforcement of a European Space Policy.

This means there is definitely a coherence, a consensus which allows us to build a European Space Security and Defence Policy in the footsteps of the ESDP.

If you were to tell me that defence policy is intergovernmental by nature, I would answer : ESA proves that space policy is as well.

This does not mean that the “inter-pillary” closeness is not desired, through Institutions and programmes alike.

Through Institutions – because even though the text of the Constitutional Treaty is still on hold - the creation of a post of Foreign Affairs Minister could perfectly well move forward autonomously. He would equally be Vice-President of the Commission and President of the Council for External Relations.

It is once again through Institutions, because the intergovernmental organization I represent this morning is busy elaborating, together with the Commission and all of the Member States, a European space policy which will be submitted for the Ministers' approval during the Space Council under the German and the Dutch Presidencies next May.

ESA, as well as the EU, think both together and separately about the institutional developments which can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of such a policy.

Through Institutions but also through programmes I was saying - because Institutions would be empty without programmes.

And here also we can develop greater complementarity between the EU and ESA. Because the EU is implicated in the issues with which European citizens have to contend. It is empowered to define and implement the corresponding sector policies. It is likewise empowered to represent and defend European interests in the international negotiations of the 21st Century concerning global security.

To perform this task, it needs independent access to whatever strategic information is required to support its negotiating position. Space systems can provide all or part of that information. Clearly the EU and ESA have shared interest, which is always the most effective basis for close and productive cooperation, meaning here the development by ESA of space infrastructures to meet the needs of the sector policy, in this case the security and defence policy, defined by the European Union.

And ESA is perfectly entitled to do so because the ESA Convention refers to technological developments for peaceful purposes exactly what the outer-space Treaty prescribes, a Treaty ratified by the countries that are active in what we refer to as "Military Space".

Through space programmes I just said, because there has already been proof of successful application of space assets for the EU led operations.

Be it in the Democratic Republic of Congo or in Bosnia Herzegovina, satellite systems have been and are being increasingly exploited in support of both civilian and military ESDP operations. There can be no doubt any longer about the relevance of space based assets as part of the ESDP toolbox.

Space assets form a system that becomes pivotal to the requirements of conflict resolution : observation, electronic surveillance, data transmission, navigation, ballistic surveillance and early warning. There is hardly any activity in today's operations on conflicts and crises which cannot be decisively supported through the use of space based systems. And that applies, of course, also to civilian operations.

Reliable information is the basis for early warning, which is itself the condition for early action and crisis management. When it comes to EU decision making related to conflicts, wherever they may occur, space based sensors are the ultimate recourse since they are reliable, they minimize uncertainty and increase the chances for timely political decisions. That has been acknowledged in the ESDP related European Policy endorsed by the EU Council in November 2004.

As stated in the White paper of the European Commission on space, and I quote : “Space has a security dimension and security has a space dimension”.

White Paper on space of which the title is : “Space, a new European Frontier for an expanding Union”.

Yes indeed, a new frontier.

Allow me, here in Guyana, at the outskirts of Europe, to quote my Director General when he says that « Space is Europe's new frontier. New technological frontier since we are dealing with very high technology programmes. New political frontier, since Europe in Space will unavoidably fall within all the institutional

reforms to come. New economical frontier, lastly, since the stakes lie at the heart of the industrial competition between the world's largest regions ».
(end of quote)

I would like to conclude this intervention by wishing you all a constructive colloquy.

A colloquy which brings more coherence, as I said in the beginning of my intervention, to the space sector, the security sector and the defence sector.

For as Nicole Gnesotto from the Institute of Security Studies underlines, and I quote :

“Forever coherent : this could finally be the most synthetic formula to sum up and give meaning to the evolutions within the European Union.

From the CAP to the Common Market, from the Unique Act to the Euro, from Foreign policy to Defence policy, the history of process within European integration could indeed be seen as an ongoing quest, obstinate, difficult but inescapable, for a maximum of coherence in means of action, within and without the Union.

The security and defence policy is no exception to the rule”.

(end of quote)

Thank you.