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Institutional challenges for the EU's growing political power

Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

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Let me start by thanking the organisers – SDA and CEIS* - and the Belgian EU Presidency, and in particular Defence Minister Pieter de Crem, for organising the 2010 edition of the Security and Defence Day.

In a fast-changing world, Europe needs to adapt to a new global environment, with new opportunities but also new challenges. More than ever Europe needs to leverage its political power if it wants to be reckoned with and wants to promote its values and interests.

One of the central political challenges for us is **to harness the institutional potential** of the Lisbon Treaty in external action and transform it into effective political power. Adjusting in practice to the Lisbon Treaty reality will probably take some time for institutions and people. Let us not forget we are still in a transition phase. The EEAS will actually start its work as of tomorrow.

The main danger would be to fall in petty institutional turf battles rather than focusing on concrete policy outcomes. A resolute political commitment and co-

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to make the Lisbon system work.

Let me illustrate this general point with the policy area I am responsible for, **humanitarian aid and crisis response**. There is definitely a scope for synergy and a need for liaison and communication between humanitarian aid and foreign policy and military actors.

I would like to offer 2 main sets of remarks regarding the opportunities and the challenges linked to the transaction between humanitarian aid and the foreign and security policy:

- **First**, on the links between the **political agenda and humanitarian aid**.

Humanitarian aid is about the recognition that respect for humanity and human dignity should stand above political considerations. It represents a beacon of hope for people in need. This humanitarian space which we have created and built as part of our own history and experience with war and human suffering needs to be preserved and protected. The principles of international humanitarian law and of impartiality, neutrality and non-discrimination that define humanitarian aid need to be upheld firmly by the EU. As the concrete expression of EU solidarity with people affected by natural and man-made disasters, humanitarian aid is definitely **part of the "narrative"** of EU external action. It reflects the values and principles that underpin the European project. The EU is the world's lead humanitarian donor. Humanitarian aid in that sense, contributes to the global 'soft power' of the EU.

- Clearly humanitarian aid **cannot cater for a lack of foreign policy** engagement and cannot contribute to crisis-solving. Humanitarian aid solely aims at saving and protecting lives. Europe learned it the hard way during the 90's when it proved unable to act decisively in ex-Yugoslavia or in the African Great Lakes region and limited its action to massive humanitarian assistance while a stabilisation military mission was badly needed.

- But conversely **subjecting humanitarian aid** to a foreign policy and security agenda doesn't work either. In Afghanistan there have been in the past some unfortunate examples of intrusive security objectives in humanitarian operations. However the reality is that humanitarian aid doesn't "*win hearts and minds*" when it is "securitised", with for example the distribution of food vouchers in return for intelligence. Worse this puts at risk the work and lives of relief workers who are no longer perceived as neutral operators but rather as proxies and auxiliaries of a foreign political and military enterprise. The very humanitarian principles I mentioned earlier are actually not ideological mantra but stem from very practical operational considerations to ensure access to the victims and acceptance of relief workers especially in conflict situations.

- However, factoring the humanitarian dimension in the **formulation of EU foreign policy** and strategy is particularly important in the context of countries in crisis or in conflict. Let's take the example of Sudan. The high Representative Cathy Ashton has recently set up a Sudan Country Task Force to which my services actively contribute by bringing their field expertise and knowledge, by informing of the humanitarian contingency planning measures taken and more important, by raising key humanitarian issues such as humanitarian access and protection of civilians and respect for International Humanitarian Law which require robust political and diplomatic action from the EU and other international players.

- **Second**, on the links between **military and humanitarian aid**. There are clearly "can /must do" situations for military to facilitate the humanitarian work but there are also "don't do" situations. The UN Oslo guidelines and MCDA (*Military and Civil Defence Assets*) guidelines define the conditions of military engagement in relation to humanitarian assistance, along the general principle of "last resort". "Last" does not mean "never" or "think of it last" but means "when appropriate" with an upfront planning, based on the respective mandates. There are 4 typical cases with respect to military engagement:

- When military assets can contribute to the provision of relief;
- When military contribute to the provision of security;
- When they contribute to both;
- When they are not needed at all;

1) The first case concerns the mobilisation of military assets for the sole purpose of contributing to the **provision of relief**. While humanitarian organisations and civil protection provide the bulk of assistance, there are cases such as large-scale natural disasters where military can complement by filling in critical "capacity gaps", notably as regards transport (cargo planes, helicopters) and heavy engineering. This was the case for the Tsunami in 2004 and the Pakistan earthquake in 2005.

2) There is also the typical case of complex emergencies where international military stabilisation operations are deployed with the main purpose to contribute to the **provision of security**. Working in a secure environment while not being directly 'securitised' is crucial for relief workers.

In such situations constant co-operation between the military with the humanitarians is of the essence. The EUFOR operation in Chad is close to the co-operative model we should aim at with extensive humanitarian briefing during the mission planning phase and liaison officers on the ground to keep channels of communication and dialogue open with the humanitarian organisations.

There is sometimes the temptation and risk of a "mission creep" from military missions into the delivery of humanitarian assistance as we have seen with the UNAMID force in Sudan. This must be resisted. Military should focus on what they are trained for and best at, that is security.

3) The third typical case refers to situations where - from a humanitarian perspective, there is a need for military engagement in both **the provision of relief and security**. This mostly applies to large natural disasters that can destabilise countries in a "fragile situation". Haiti is a clear case in point. EU military assets facilitated the transport of relief cargo and contributed to the removal debris and preparation of relocation sites. In parallel to this, a contingent of gendarmerie was dispatched by the EU upon the request of the UN stabilisation force MINUSTAH requested to help them maintain law and order. Whether on the relief side or on the security side, the EU military effort was plugged in to the coordination mechanisms in place both at UN and EU levels.

4) The last case obviously concerns the majority of humanitarian disasters situations where **no military intervention** at all is needed. Either because the local authorities don't need it or don't want it; or because the UN and humanitarian organisations don't need it as they can deal with the needs on their own – and because it makes sense to let the civilian actors whose basic mandate it is to deal with disasters do the job, just as we ourselves would expect our civilian ambulance or fire services to be the first responders to emergencies closer to home.

These remarks and examples, based on concrete experience should inform our reflection and guide our action regarding the development of EU disaster response and crisis management capacity. We will obviously have to establish working arrangements and protocols between the Commission and the EEAS which will allow us to operate smoothly, drawing on the roles and experiences of each service.

And I am confident that this will work out. Cathy Ashton and I are certainly determined to work hand in hand towards this aim, as it is a condition for the effectiveness and coherence of EU external action.

Thank you for your attention.