

Address by Javier Solana conveyed to the WEU Assembly (3 June 2002)

Caption: On 3 June 2002, Javier Solana, Secretary-General of Western European Union (WEU) and of the Council of the European Union (EU), gives a speech on the restructuring of WEU bodies and agencies.

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ADDRESS CONVEYED TO THE ASSEMBLY

*by Mr Solana, WEU Secretary-General and
High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy
of the Council of the European Union*

31 May 2002

Mr President,

Members of the Assembly,

I shall review some of the highlights from the activities of the WEU bodies over the last six months.

1. WEU activities in Brussels and Paris

The Secretariat is discharging its residual functions satisfactorily and efficiently:

- A financial report is being prepared on the disposal of the Organisation's assets.
- Appropriate measures have been taken to address the administrative and financial consequences of transforming WEU's Institute for Security Studies and Satellite Centre into European Union agencies. In addition, on 7 February 2002 the Council decided to dissolve its Space Group.
- The various archives have been assembled in Brussels and their reorganisation at the rue de l'Association will be completed shortly.
- The organisation of the Paris Administrative Service, as decided by the Council on 26 November and 18 December 2001, has proved its effectiveness under Mr Loutz, your Clerk Assistant for Administration and Finance. Here, Mr President, I should like to say once again how grateful I am for the spirit of constructive cooperation you have exhibited in this regard, and which has allowed us to arrive at both a practical and a financially sensible solution. Indeed, the Council and the Assembly have everything to gain, both now and in the future, from prudent and thrifty management of the Organisation's assets. It is a clear requirement of the governments funding our respective budgets. It must be our – albeit modest – contribution to increasing the resources needed to develop the ESDP.

Mr President, you have once again drawn the Spanish Presidency's attention to the contribution of the Associate Members to the Organisation's budgets. At its meeting on 28 May last, the Council unanimously reaffirmed its decision of 14 June 2001. Need I remind you that none of the 28 WEU nations has raised objections to the practical implications of that decision. I have written to you at the Council's request to that effect.

The institutional dialogue between your Assembly and the Council has proceeded smoothly under the aegis of the Spanish Presidency. Thus:

- the second part of the forty-seventh annual report of the Council to the Assembly for the period 1 July to 31 December 2001 was forwarded to you on 20 March 2002;
- at the beginning of March, you received most of the Council replies to the recommendations adopted during your December session; replies to armaments questions were forwarded at the end of April;
- finally, your written questions were answered.

And last but not least, the Secretariat has continued to supply the necessary administrative and financial support to the armaments cooperation bodies, WEAG and WEAO, with acknowledged efficiency.

2. WEAG and WEAO activities

During recent weeks, the *Western European Armaments Organisation Research Cell* has kept up its efforts with regard to the signing of project agreements and the awarding of Research and Technology contracts – with some success: between November 2000 and May 2002, 35 agreements and 25 contracts were signed, bringing the total value of all current projects to 500 million euro.

Furthermore, the Research Cell has provided support to the WEAG organs in charge of the Research and Technology Memoranda of Understanding.

Three first amendments to these Memoranda of Understanding were signed on 16 May 2002 by Defence Ministers meeting in Rome, their purpose being to:

- extend the validity of the SOCRATE (*System of Cooperation for Research and Technology in Europe*) Memorandum of Understanding;
- allow Poland to become participants in the EUROPA (*European Understandings for Research Organisation Programmes and Activities*) Memorandum of Understanding;
- allow the Czech Republic and Poland to become participants in the Test Facilities Memorandum of Understanding and to extend its scope.

You will remember that, when it was set up as a WEU subsidiary body in November 1996, WEAO was declared open to all 13 members of WEAG with equal rights. The WEU Council's decision of 10 April 2002 opened up WEAO to the six new WEAG members wishing to participate in the activities of the Western European Armaments Organisation and subscribe to its Memorandum of Understanding. The requisite amendment was therefore signed in Rome on 16 May, including by four new participants: the Czech Republic, Finland, Poland and Sweden. For domestic political reasons, Austria and Hungary have deferred their participation until a second amendment to the WEAO Memorandum of Understanding is signed.

As far as WEAG is concerned, I would like briefly to highlight some points arising from its Ministerial meeting held in Rome on 16 May last, the first since November 2000:

- WEAG Defence Ministers noted with satisfaction the report by the National Armaments Directors on “Options for European Armaments Structures” which highlights the aims and possible functions of future European armaments cooperation.
- They agreed that WEAG, as the widest forum of European nations, could make a valuable contribution in maximising convergence on the important issue of armaments cooperation.
- Ministers also recognised that developments in the ESDP, the EU Headline Goal and the NATO Defence Capabilities Initiative (DCI) or its follow-on provide a window of opportunity to utilise WEAG's competence in the field of European armaments cooperation.
- Ministers therefore concluded that WEAG is to be maintained as a forum for political consultations in the field of armaments in Europe and for the promotion of cooperation among its member nations.

They also agreed that WEAG/WEAO should play a more proactive role in European armaments cooperation taking into account the developments in the ESDP, with the EU Headline Goal, and in NATO.

Ministers accordingly decided to re-examine the scope of the internal structure's work. The assignment of additional functions to WEAO will also be considered.

As far as a European Armaments Agency project is concerned, Ministers endorsed the concept of an evolutionary process, envisaging its establishment as soon as political consensus is reached. Any outstanding work is to continue under the direction of NADs.

A final word on future WEAG ministerial meetings. It is proposed that they take place either once a year to conclude an activities cycle and provide guidance or to coincide with a Chair handover. This does not exclude holding extraordinary meetings if and when required.